VIZ PREMIERE COMICS
$4.25 USA/$5.75 CAN

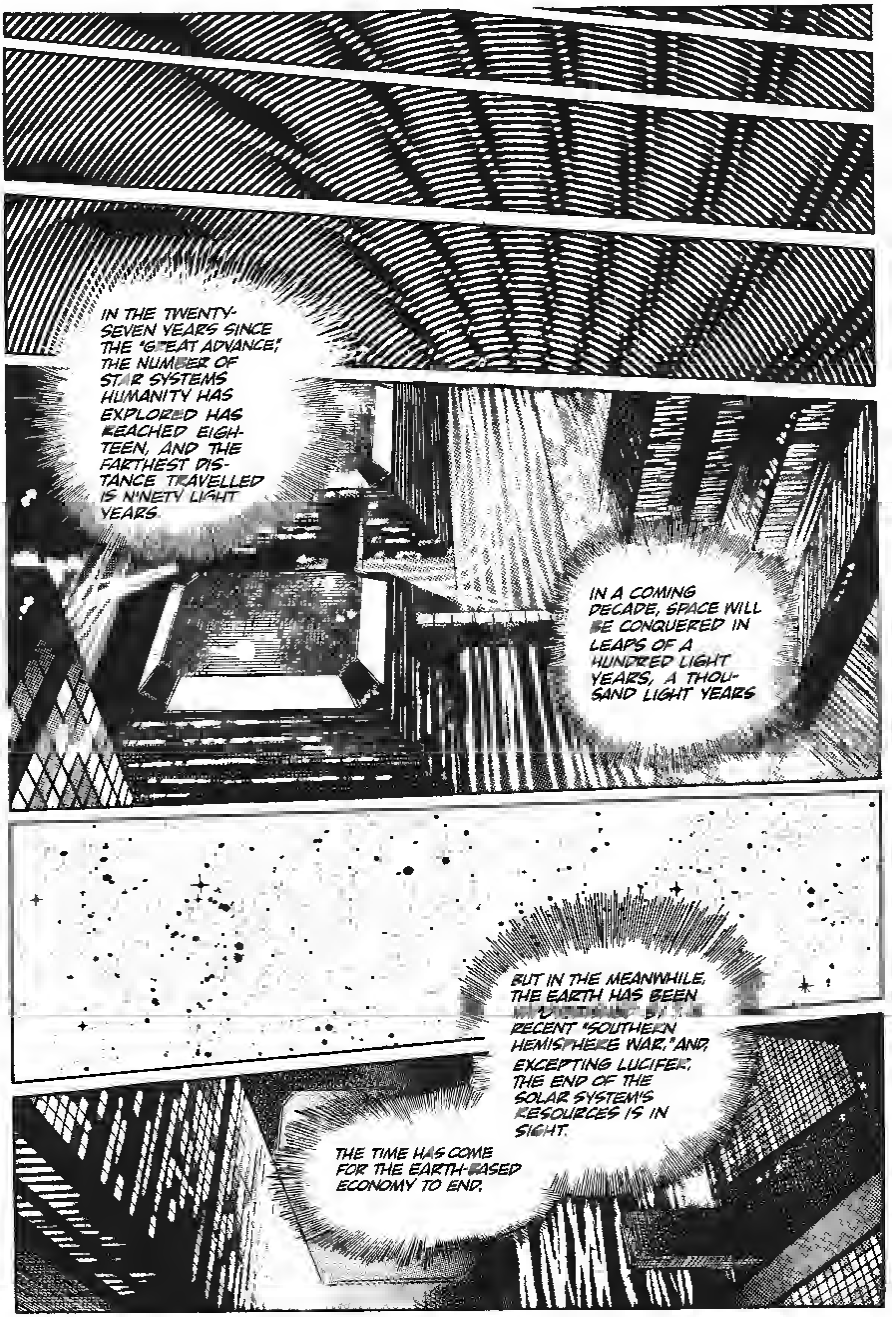
20TH CENTURY BOYS

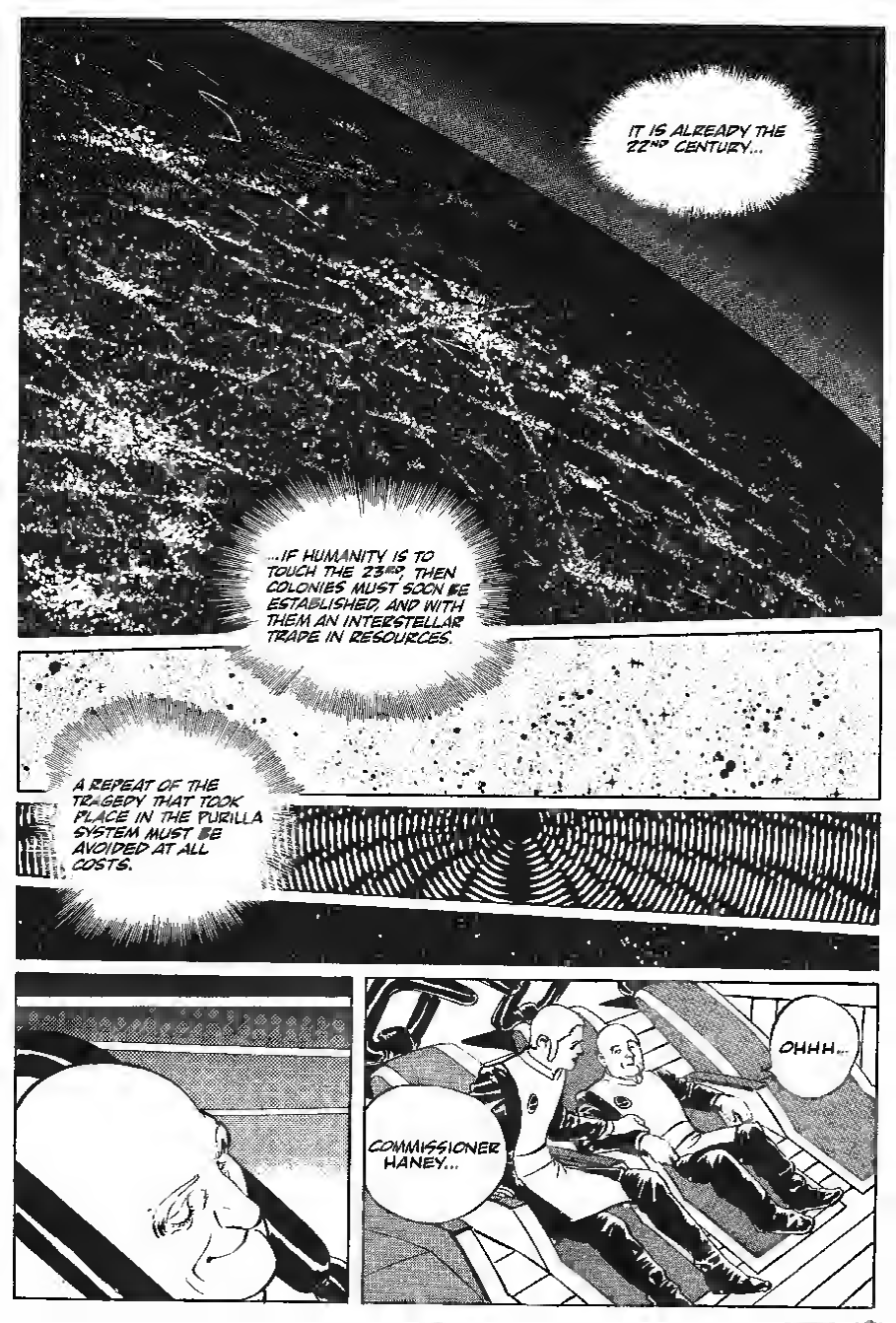
21ST CENTURY BOYS

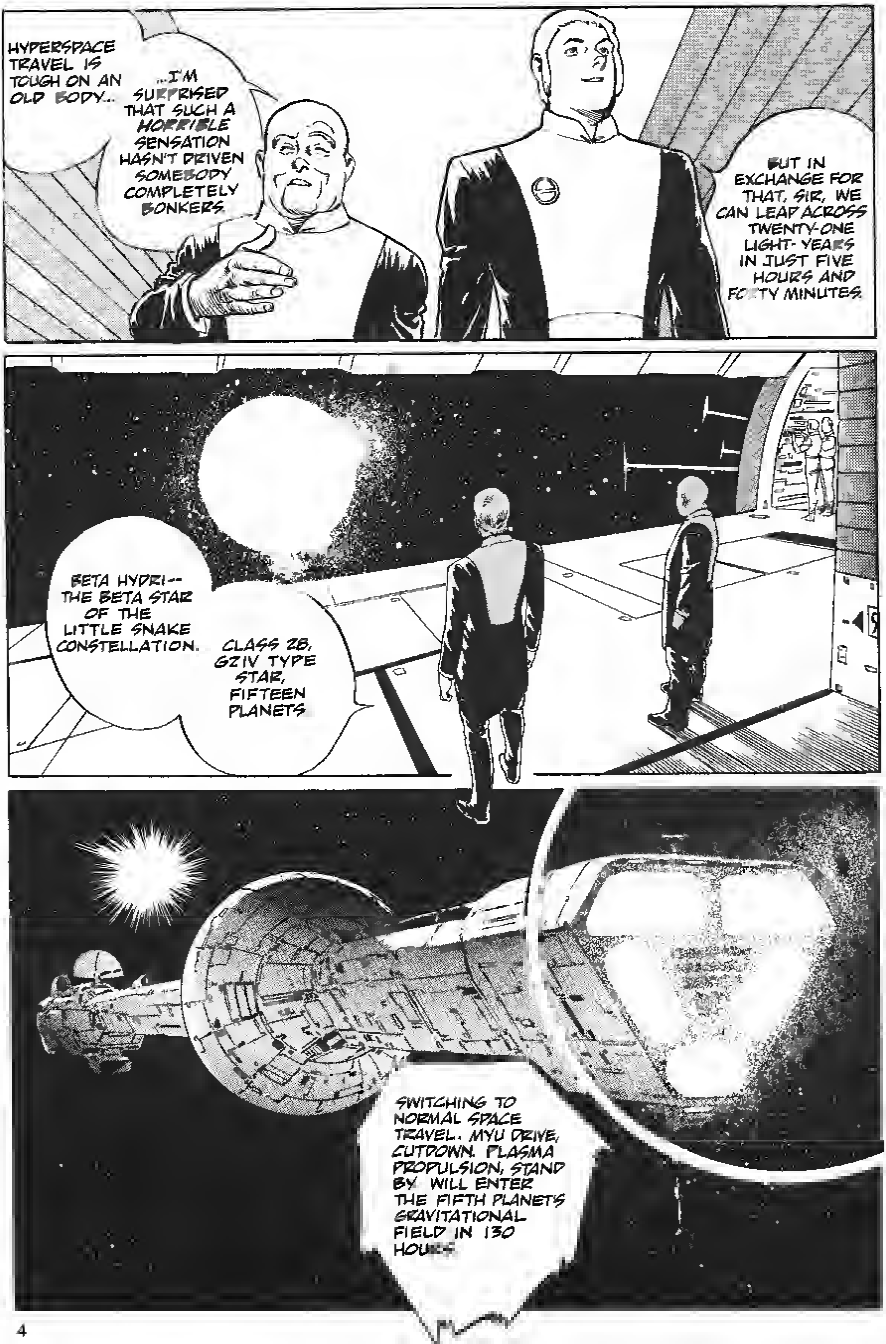
NO. 6

Story and Art by
YUKINOBU HOSHINO

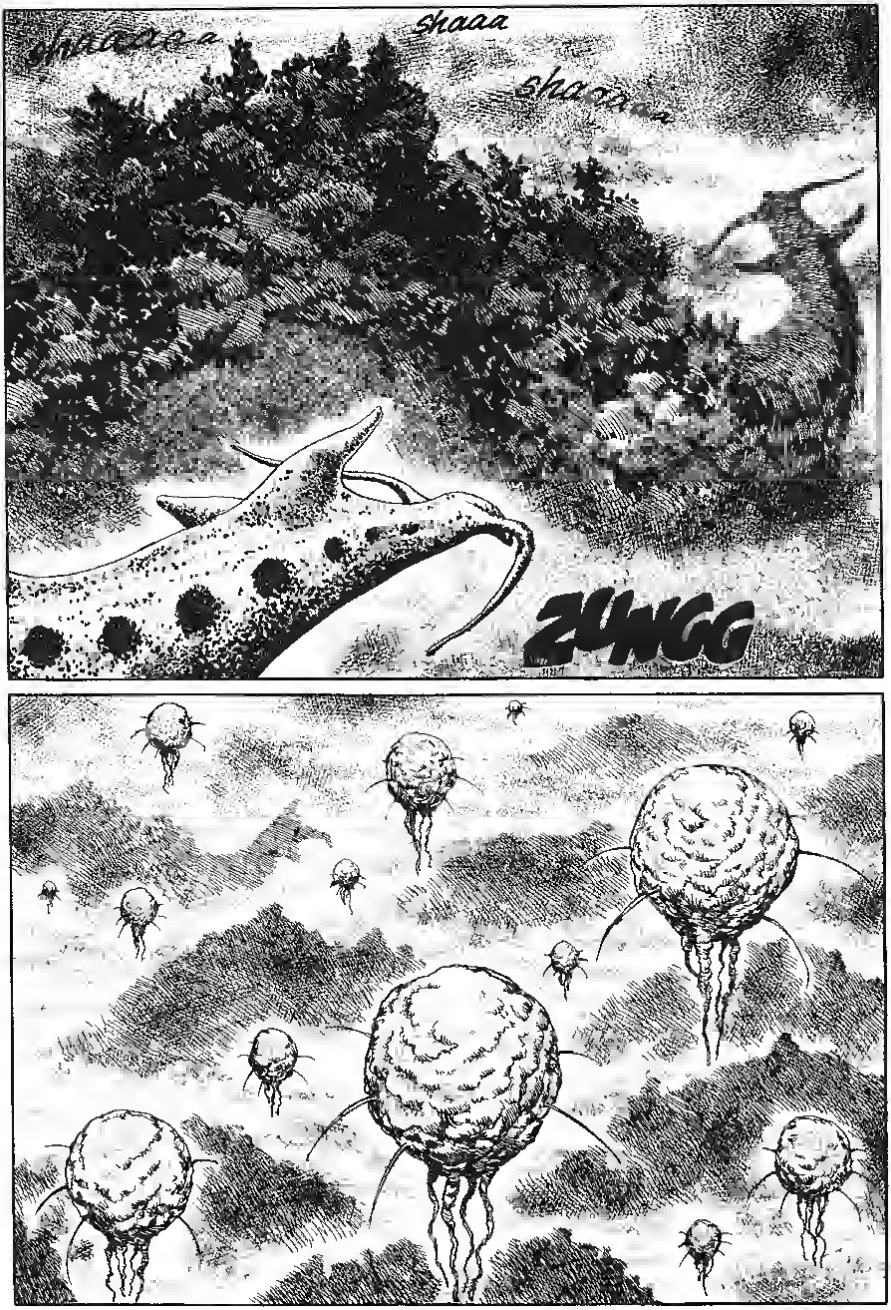
Night 12: Symbiotic Planet

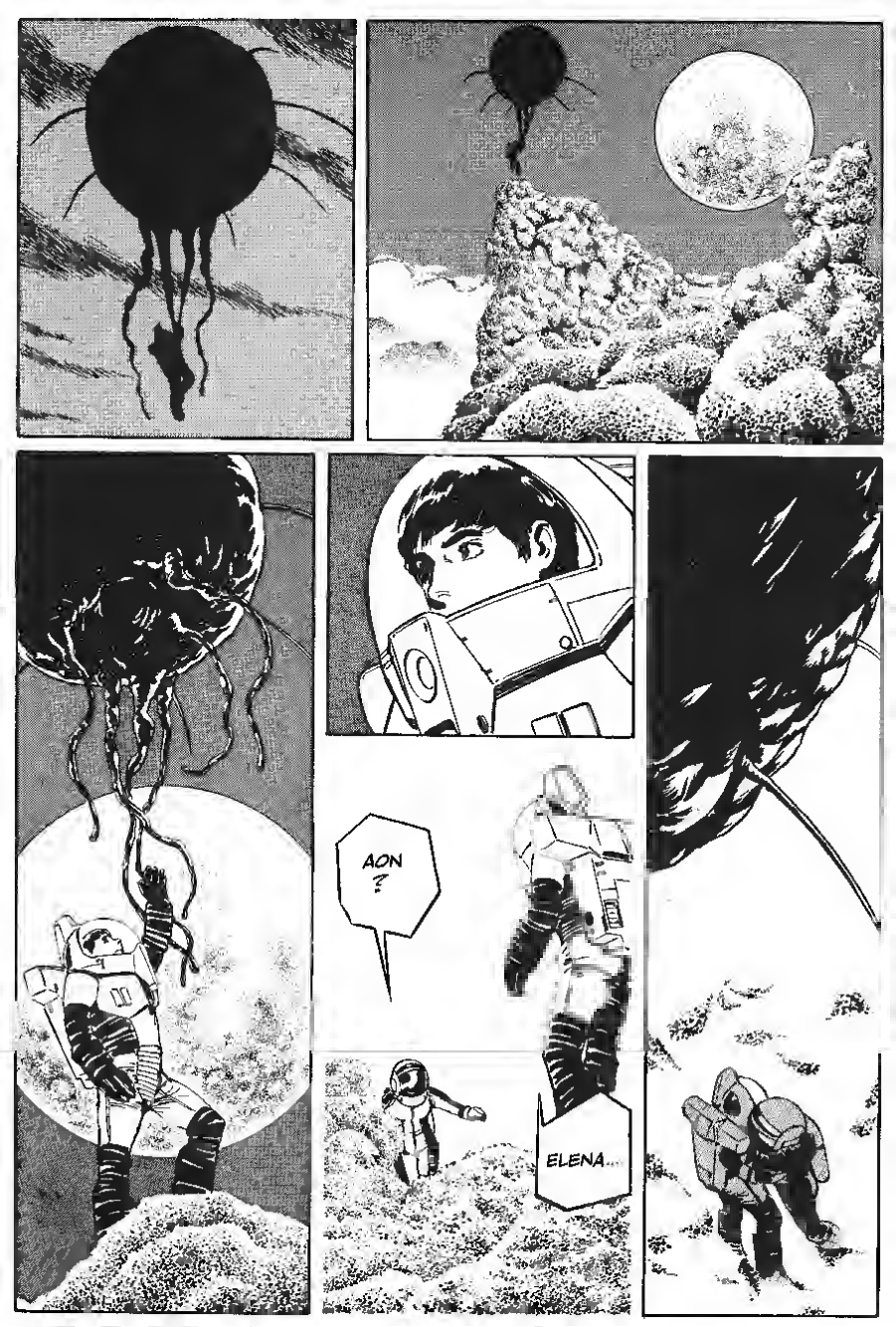

IN THE TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS SINCE THE "GREAT ADVANCE," THE NUMBER OF STAR SYSTEMS HUMANITY HAS EXPLORED HAS REACHED EIGHTEEN, AND THE FARTHEST DISTANCE TRAVELLED IS NINETY LIGHT YEARS.
IN A COMING DECADE, SPACE WILL BE CONQUERED IN LEAPS OF A HUNDRED LIGHT YEARS, A THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS
BUT IN THE MEANWHILE, THE EARTH HAS BEEN [illegible] BY A RECENT "SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE WAR," AND, EXCEPTING LUCIFER, THE END OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM'S RESOURCES IS IN SIGHT.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE EARTH-BASED ECONOMY TO END.

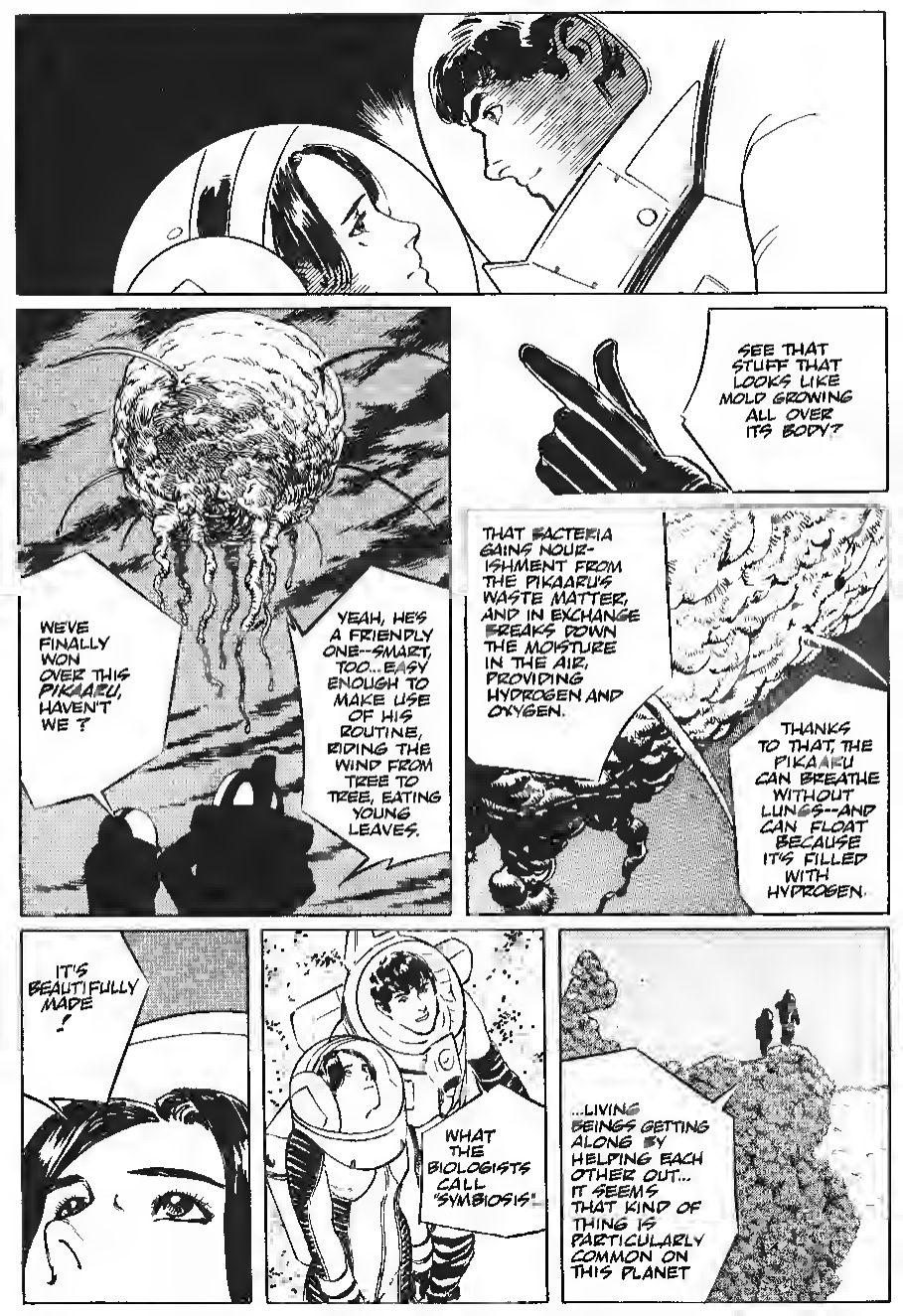

IT IS ALREADY THE 22ND CENTURY...
...IF HUMANITY IS TO TOUCH THE 23RD, THEN COLONIES MUST SOON BE ESTABLISHED, AND WITH THEM AN INTERSTELLAR TRADE IN RESOURCES.
A REPEAT OF THE TRAGEDY THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE PURILLA SYSTEM MUST BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS.
OHHH...
COMMISSIONER HANEY...

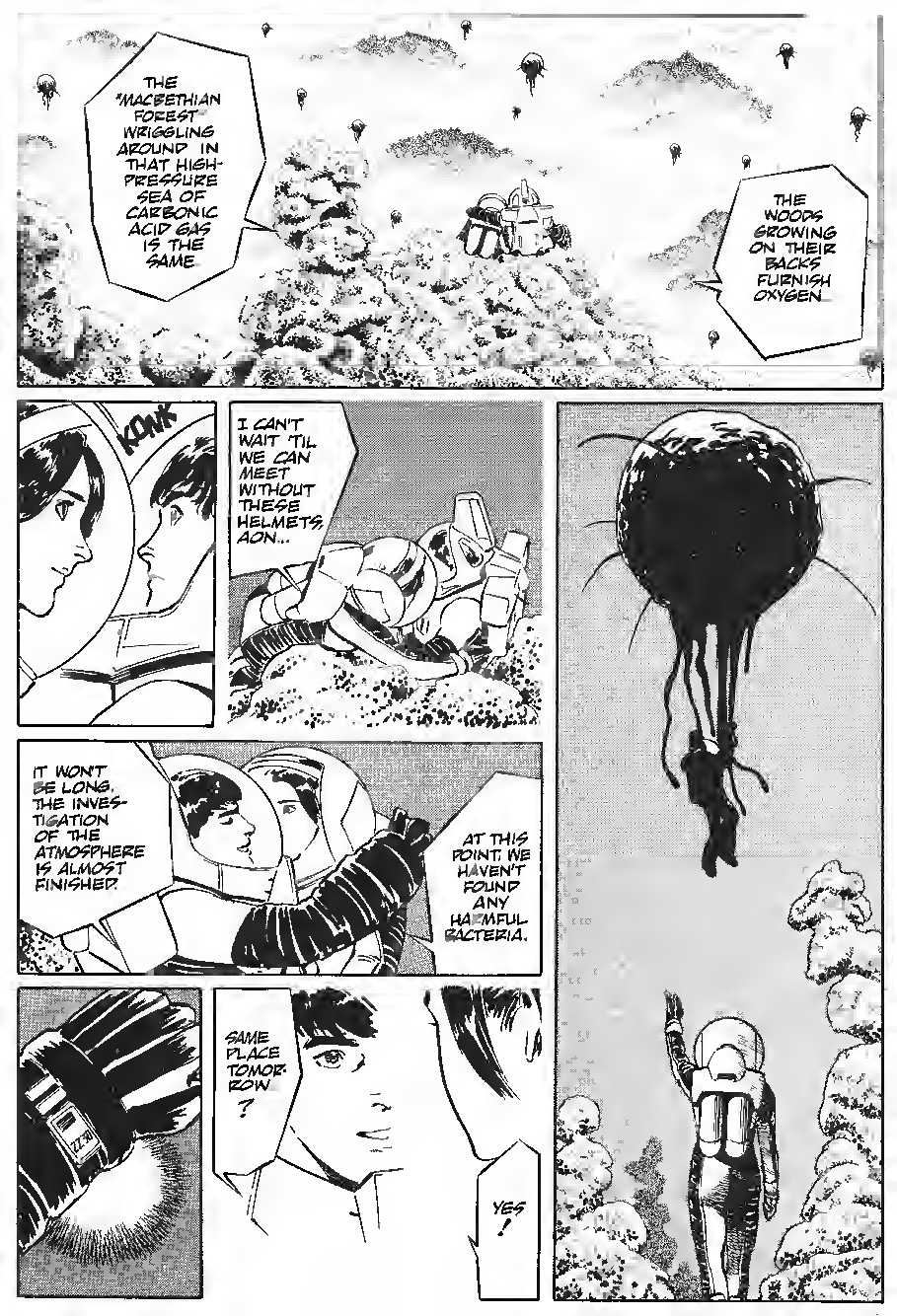

HYPERSPACE TRAVEL IS TOUGH ON AN OLD BODY..
...I'M SURPRISED THAT SUCH A HORRIBLE SENSATION HASN'T DRIVEN SOMEBODY COMPLETELY BONKERS
BUT IN EXCHANGE FOR THAT, SIR, WE CAN LEAP ACROSS TWENTY-ONE LIGHT-YEARS IN JUST FIVE HOURS AND FORTY MINUTES.
BETA HYDRI-- THE BETA STAR OF THE LITTLE SNAKE CONSTELLATION.
CLASS ZB, GZIV TYPE STAR, FIFTEEN PLANETS
SWITCHING TO NORMAL SPACE TRAVEL. MYU DRIVE, CUTDOWN. PLASMA PROPULSION, STAND BY. WILL ENTER THE FIFTH PLANET'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD IN 130 HOURS

CAPTAIN, HAVE YOU MADE CONTACT WITH THE FIFTH PLANET YET ?
YES, SIR--AND THEY'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING THEIR NEW SUPPLIES..
.. GLAD TO OBLIGE, BUT I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DAY THAT EARTH IS IMPORTING MORE THAN IT'S EXPORTING!
WE'RE STILL A WAYS OFF FROM THAT, CAPTAIN
shaaa
shaaa shaaaaa


shaaaa
shaaa
shaaaa
ZUNGG


AON ?
ELENA...

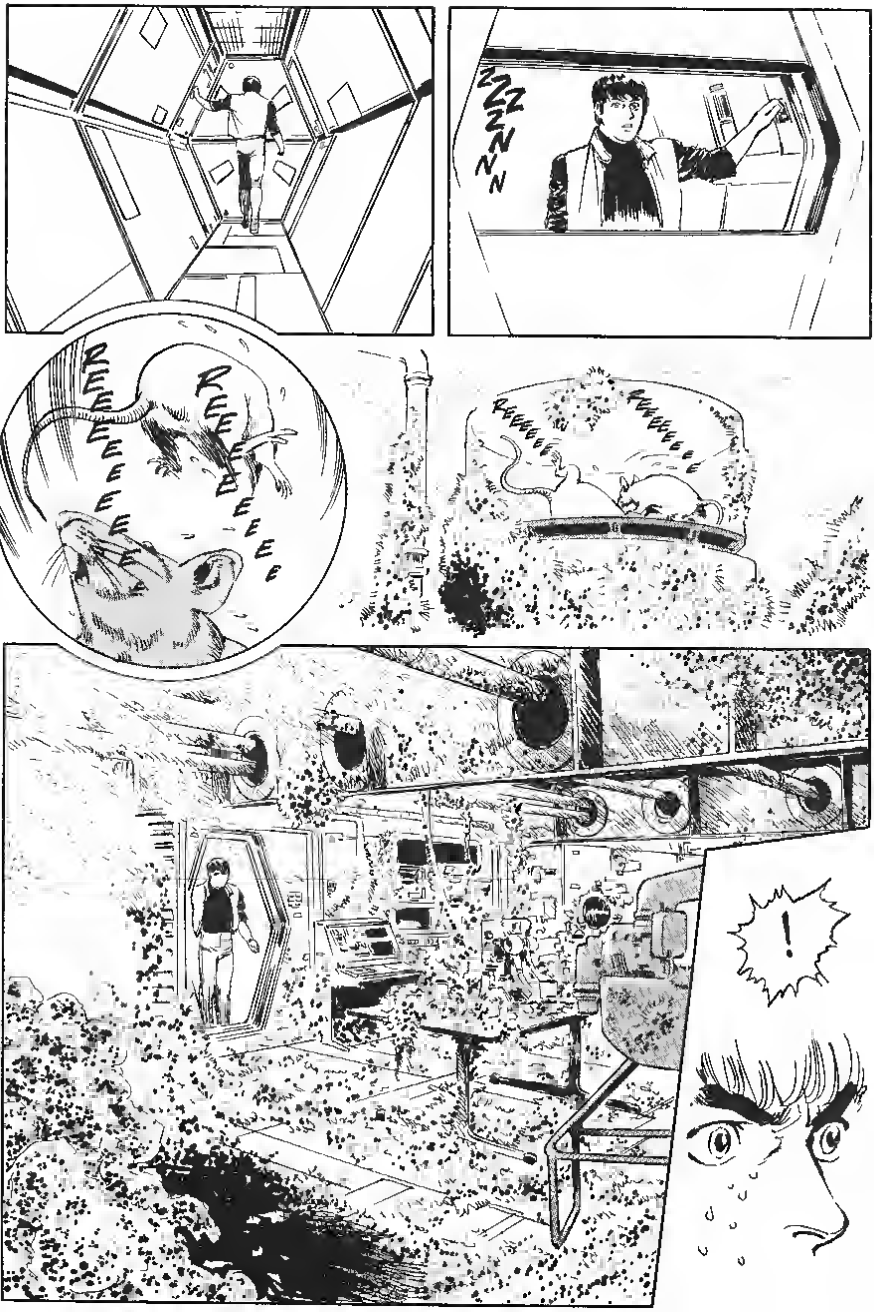

SEE THAT STUFF THAT LOOKS LIKE MOLD GROWING ALL OVER ITS BODY?
THAT BACTERIA GAINS NOURISHMENT FROM THE PIKAARU'S WASTE MATTER, AND IN EXCHANGE BREAKS DOWN THE MOISTURE IN THE AIR, PROVIDING HYDROGEN AND OXYGEN.
THANKS TO THAT, THE PIKAARU CAN BREATHE WITHOUT LUNGS--AND CAN FLOAT BECAUSE IT'S FILLED WITH HYDROGEN.
WE'VE FINALLY WON OVER THIS PIKAARU, HAVEN'T WE?
YEAH, HE'S A FRIENDLY ONE--SMART, TOO...EASY ENOUGH TO MAKE USE OF HIS ROUTINE, RIDING THE WIND FROM TREE TO TREE, EATING YOUNG LEAVES.
IT'S BEAUTIFULLY MADE!
WHAT THE BIOLOGISTS CALL "SYMBIOSIS"
...LIVING BEINGS GETTING ALONG BY HELPING EACH OTHER OUT... IT SEEMS THAT KIND OF THING IS PARTICULARLY COMMON ON THIS PLANET


THE "MACBETHIAN FOREST WRIGGLING AROUND IN THAT HIGH-PRESSURE SEA OF CARBONIC ACID GAS IS THE SAME.
THE WOODS GROWING ON THEIR BACKS FURNISH OXYGEN.
KOWK
I CAN'T WAIT 'TIL WE CAN MEET WITHOUT THESE HELMETS AON...
IT WON'T BE LONG. THE INVESTIGATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE IS ALMOST FINISHED.
AT THIS POINT WE HAVEN'T FOUND ANY HARMFUL BACTERIA.
SAME PLACE TOMORROW?
YES!

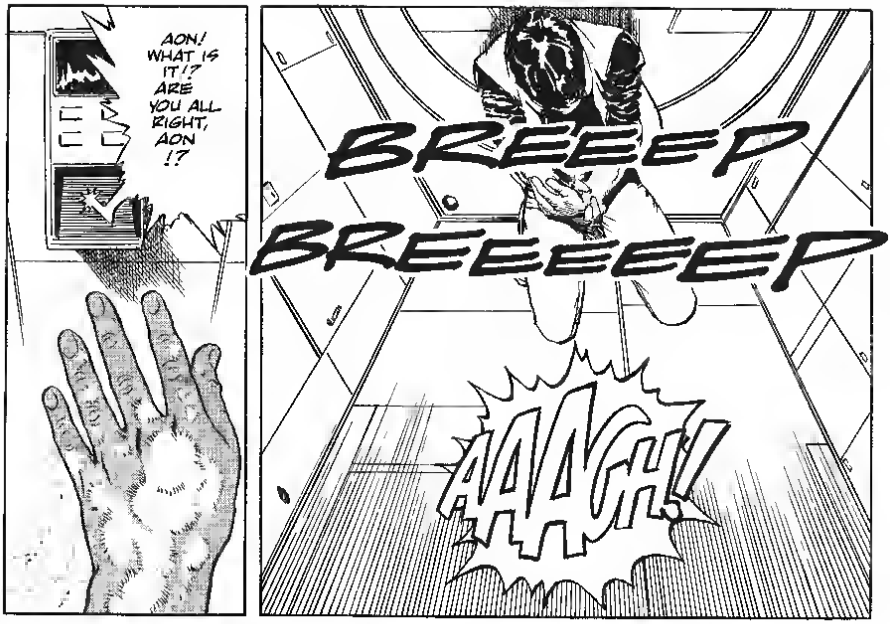
SEE YOU AGAIN TOMORROW, PIKAARU.
AND THANKS!
SHOOOSH
ANOTHER DATE WITH JULIET, EH, ROMEO?
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, NOW IS IT, MAJOR BERUCHIN?

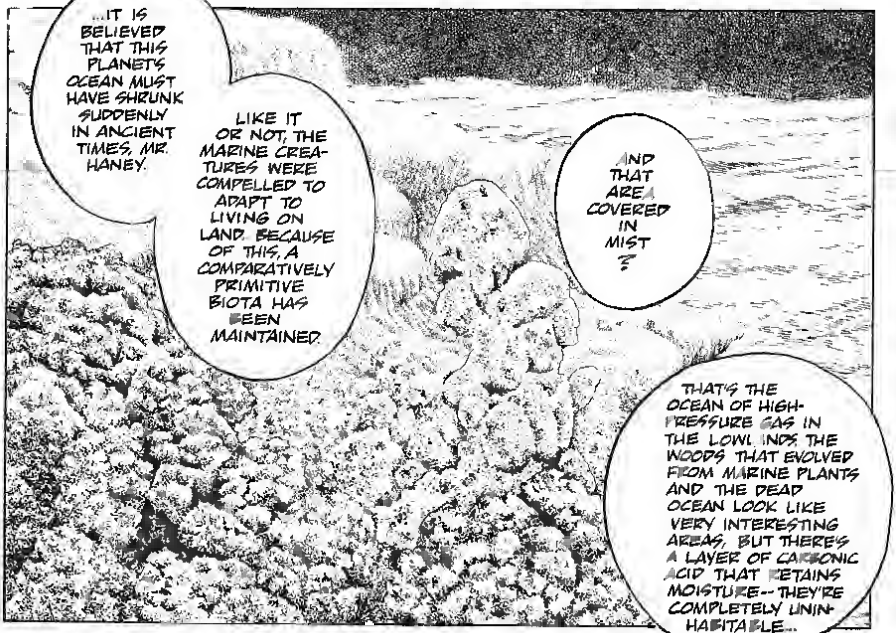
DON'T BE SO SURE...
EAST-WEST RELATIONS HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT, WELL, DELICATE SINCE THE INCIDENT ON PURILLA II.
WE CAN'T GUARANTEE THAT THE SAME THING WON'T HAPPEN HERE.
SOME TRIFLING TROUBLE COULD START A WAR, GOT IT? NOW, I'M WARNING YOU...
...STAY AWAY FROM THOSE EURASIAN WOMEN OR ELSE!
NO!
I DON'T CARE IF THIS BASE IS CONTROLLED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMON COUNCIL! I'M A SCIENTIST, NOT SOME PLAYTHING FOR THE UNITED SPACE ARMY!
IF YOU WANT TO HAVE A WAR, DO IT ON EARTH!
..PUNK!

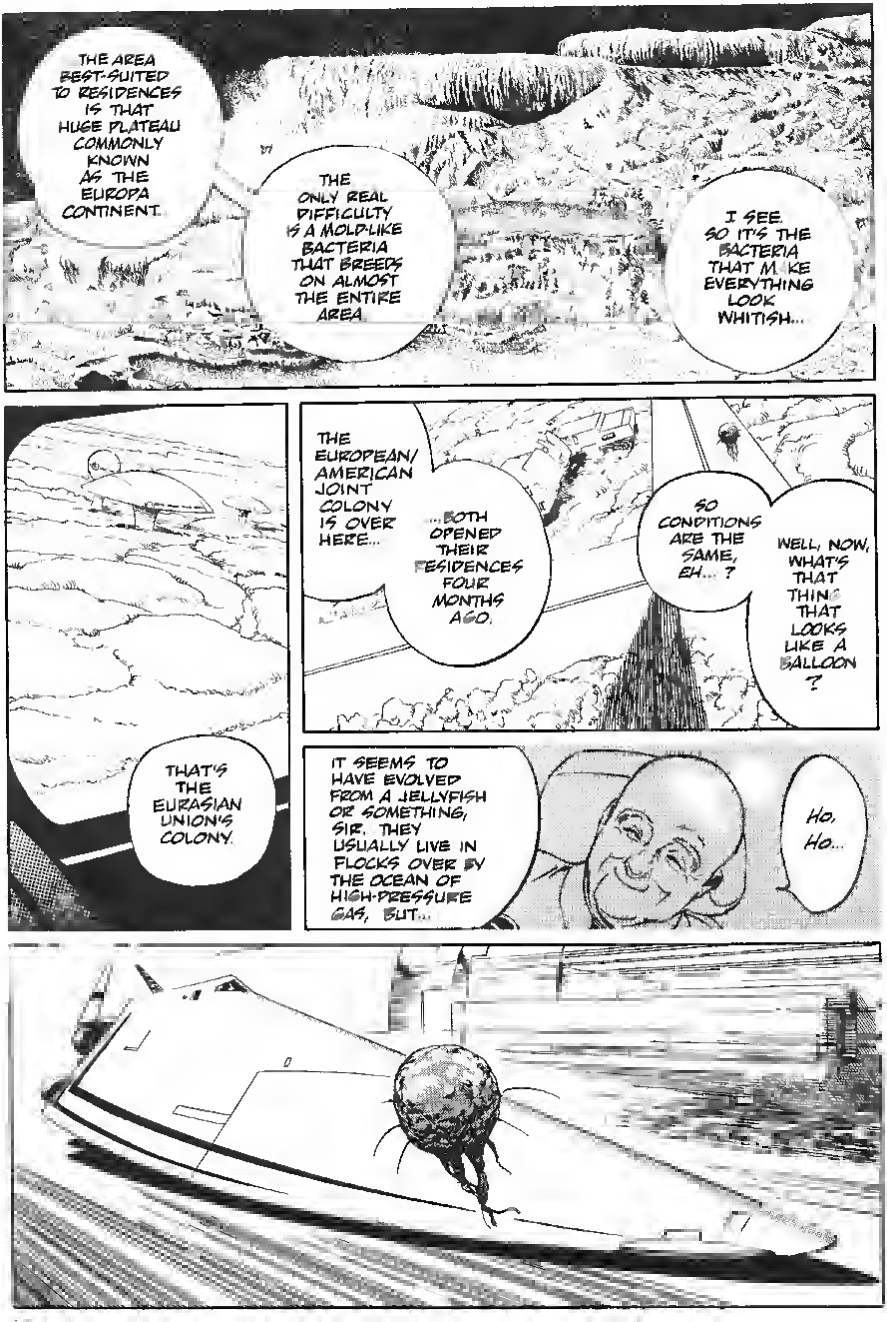
--AND SO, BECAUSE NIGHT TIME ON A STRANGE PLANET MAY PROVE DANGEROUS, STARTING TONIGHT NO ONE WILL BE ALLOWED TO GO OUT ALONE
VIOLATORS WILL FACE SEVERE PUNISHMENT, SO KEEP THAT IN MIND...
DAMN! THAT BASTARD!
THAT'S TOO BAD, AON BUT YOU'LL WORK SOMETHING OUT EVENTUALLY
41
WHUD
ARE THE ATMOSPHERIC TESTS COMING ALONG OKAY?
THIS'LL BE THE LAST EXPERIMENT! THERE'S SOME KIND OF STRANGE SPORE
ZZZNN
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU IF WE CAN LIVE WITHOUT HELMETS, THIS PLANET WILL BECOME THE EARTH'S FIRST TRUE COLONY
CHUK
I KNOW!

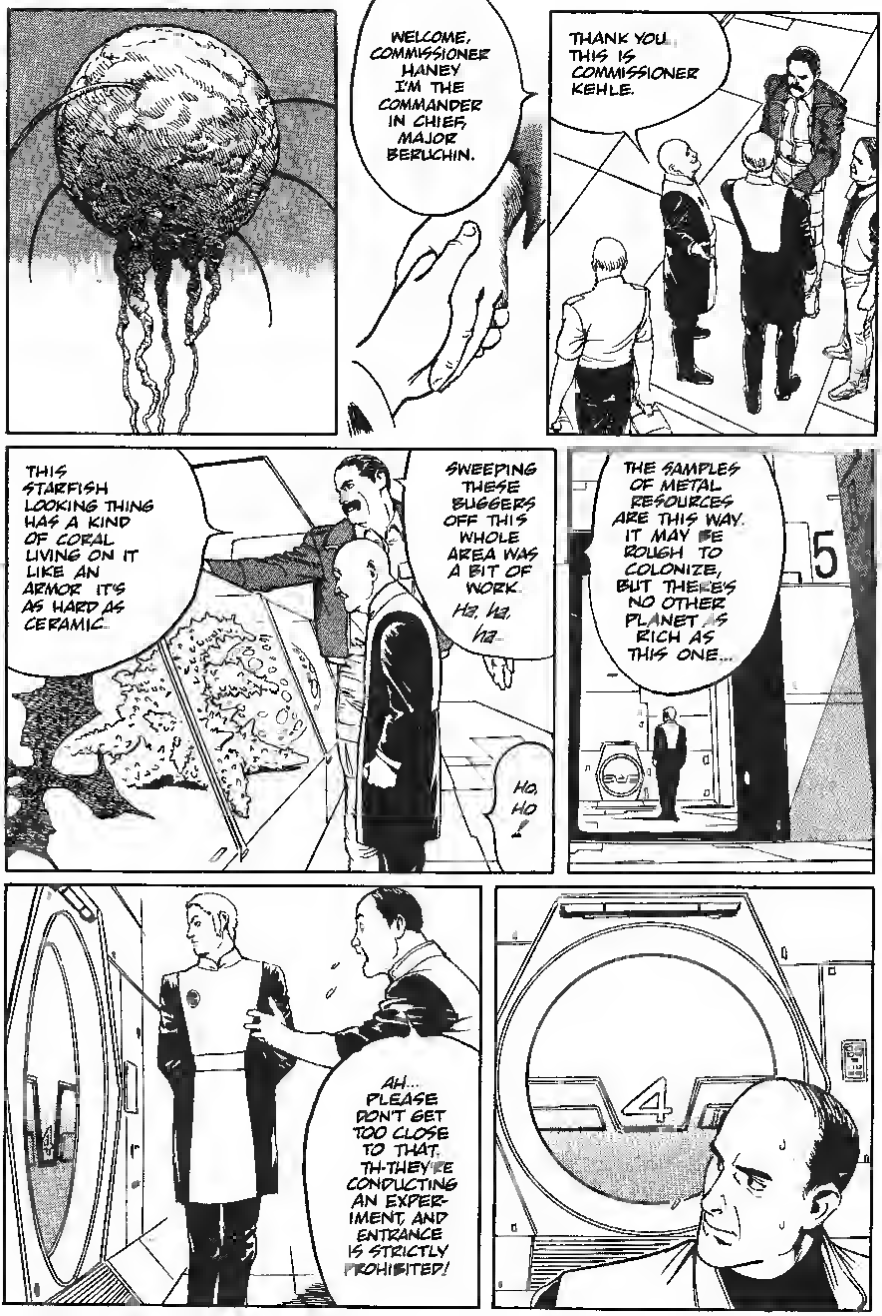

NNNNN
REEEEEEEEEE
REEEEEEEEEE
REEEEEEEEE
REEEEEEEEE
!

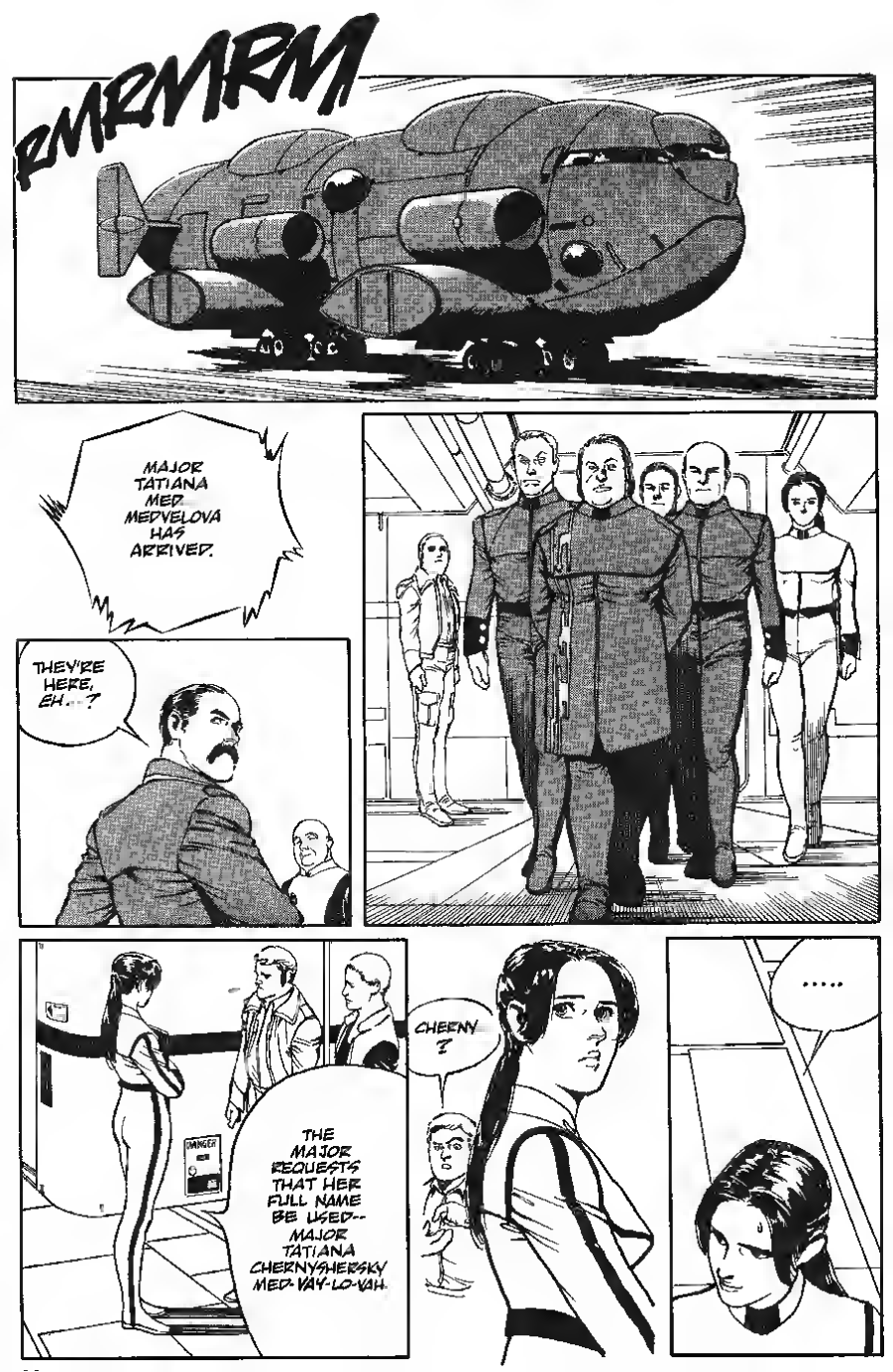
ZZZNNNN
BREEP!
SHOO
SHOOOOSH
...AN ACCIDENT-- SOMEHOW THE SAMPLE HAS ESCAPED. SPREAD OVERNIGHT!
THE EXPERIMENTAL MICE WERE IN PAIN IT SEEMS TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON ANIMALS.
DON'T LET ANYONE THROUGH THIS DOOR!!
HI'S AON. I'M IN THE LABORATORY


AON! WHAT IS IT!? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, AON!?
BREEEP
BREEEEEP
AAAGH!


...IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS PLANET'S OCEAN MUST HAVE SHRUNK SUDDENLY IN ANCIENT TIMES, MR. HANEY.
LIKE IT OR NOT, THE MARINE CREATURES WERE COMPELLED TO ADAPT TO LIVING ON LAND. BECAUSE OF THIS, A COMPARATIVELY PRIMITIVE BIOTA HAS BEEN MAINTAINED.
AND THAT ARE A COVERED IN MIST?
THAT'S THE OCEAN OF HIGH-PRESSURE GAS IN THE LOWLANDS. THE WOODS THAT EVOLVED FROM MARINE PLANTS AND THE DEAD OCEAN LOOK LIKE VERY INTERESTING AREAS, BUT THERE'S A LAYER OF CARBONIC ACID THAT RETAINS MOISTURE-- THEY'RE COMPLETELY UNINHABITABLE...


THE AREA BEST-SUITED TO RESIDENCES IS THAT HUGE PLATEAU COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE EUROPA CONTINENT.
THE ONLY REAL DIFFICULTY IS A MOLD-LIKE BACTERIA THAT BREEDS ON ALMOST THE ENTIRE AREA.
I SEE. SO IT'S THE BACTERIA THAT M KE EVERYTHING LOOK WHITISH...
THAT'S THE EURASIAN UNION'S COLONY.
THE EUROPEAN/ AMERICAN JOINT COLONY IS OVER HERE...
...BOTH OPENED THEIR RESIDENCES FOUR MONTHS AGO.
SO CONDITIONS ARE THE SAME, EH...?
WELL, NOW, WHAT'S THAT THING THAT LOOKS LIKE A BALLOON?
IT SEEMS TO HAVE EVOLVED FROM A JELLYFISH OR SOMETHING, SIR. THEY USUALLY LIVE IN FLOCKS OVER BY THE OCEAN OF HIGH-PRESSURE GAS, BUT...
HO, HO...

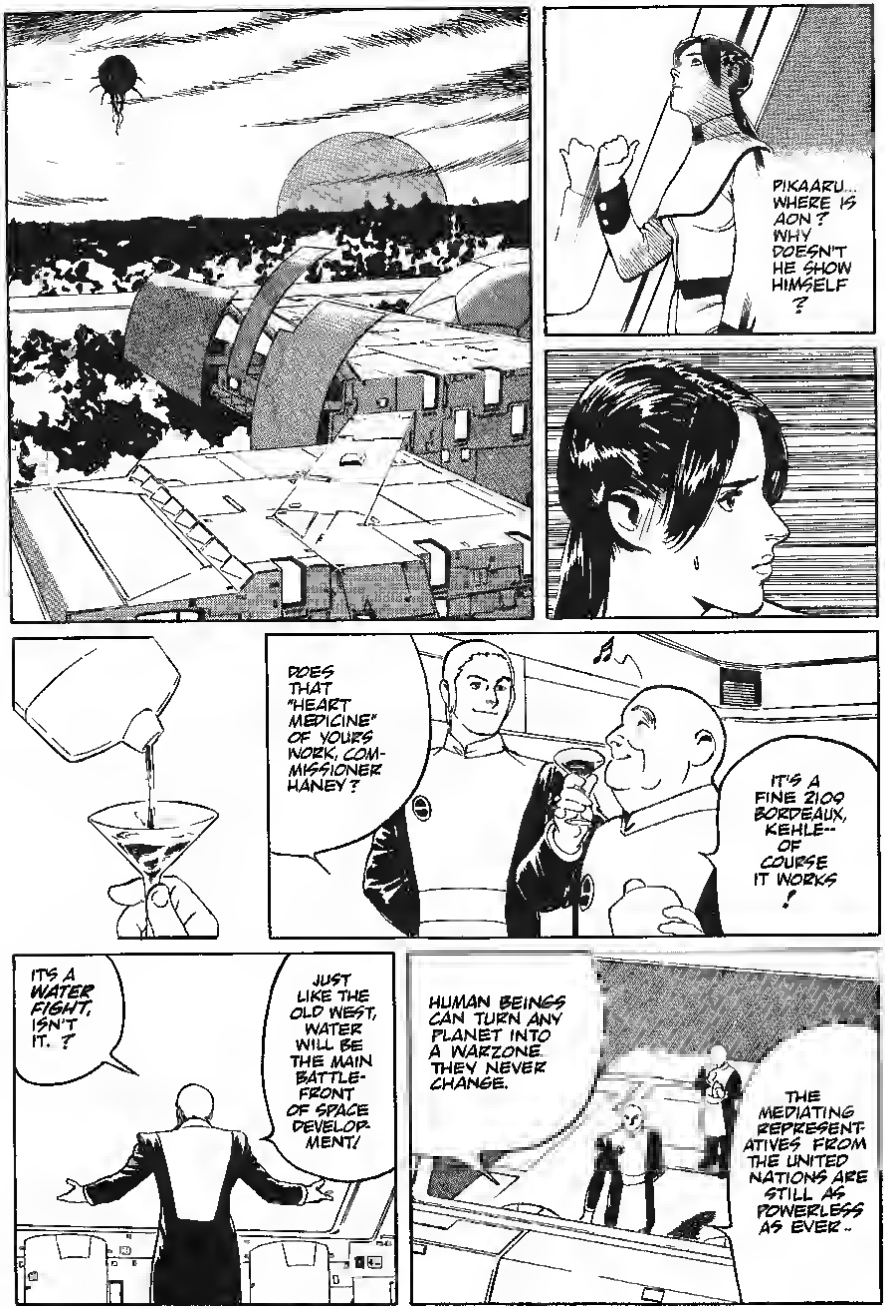

WELCOME, COMMISSIONER HANEY I'M THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF, MAJOR BERUCHIN.
THANK YOU. THIS IS COMMISSIONER KEHLE.
THIS STARFISH LOOKING THING HAS A KIND OF CORAL LIVING ON IT LIKE AN ARMOR. IT'S AS HARD AS CERAMIC.
SWEEPING THESE BUGGERS OFF THIS WHOLE AREA WAS A BIT OF WORK. HA, HA, HA.
HO, HO!
THE SAMPLES OF METAL RESOURCES ARE THIS WAY. IT MAY BE ROUGH TO COLONIZE, BUT THERE'S NO OTHER PLANET AS RICH AS THIS ONE...
5
AH... PLEASE DON'T GET TOO CLOSE TO THAT. TH-THEY'RE CONDUCTING AN EXPERIMENT, AND ENTRANCE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED!
4


RMRMRM
MAJOR TATIANA MED MEDVELOVA HAS ARRIVED.
THEY'RE HERE, EH...?
DANGER
THE MAJOR REQUESTS THAT HER FULL NAME BE USED-- MAJOR TATIANA CHERNYSHERSKY MED-VAY-LO-VAH.
CHERNY ?
.....

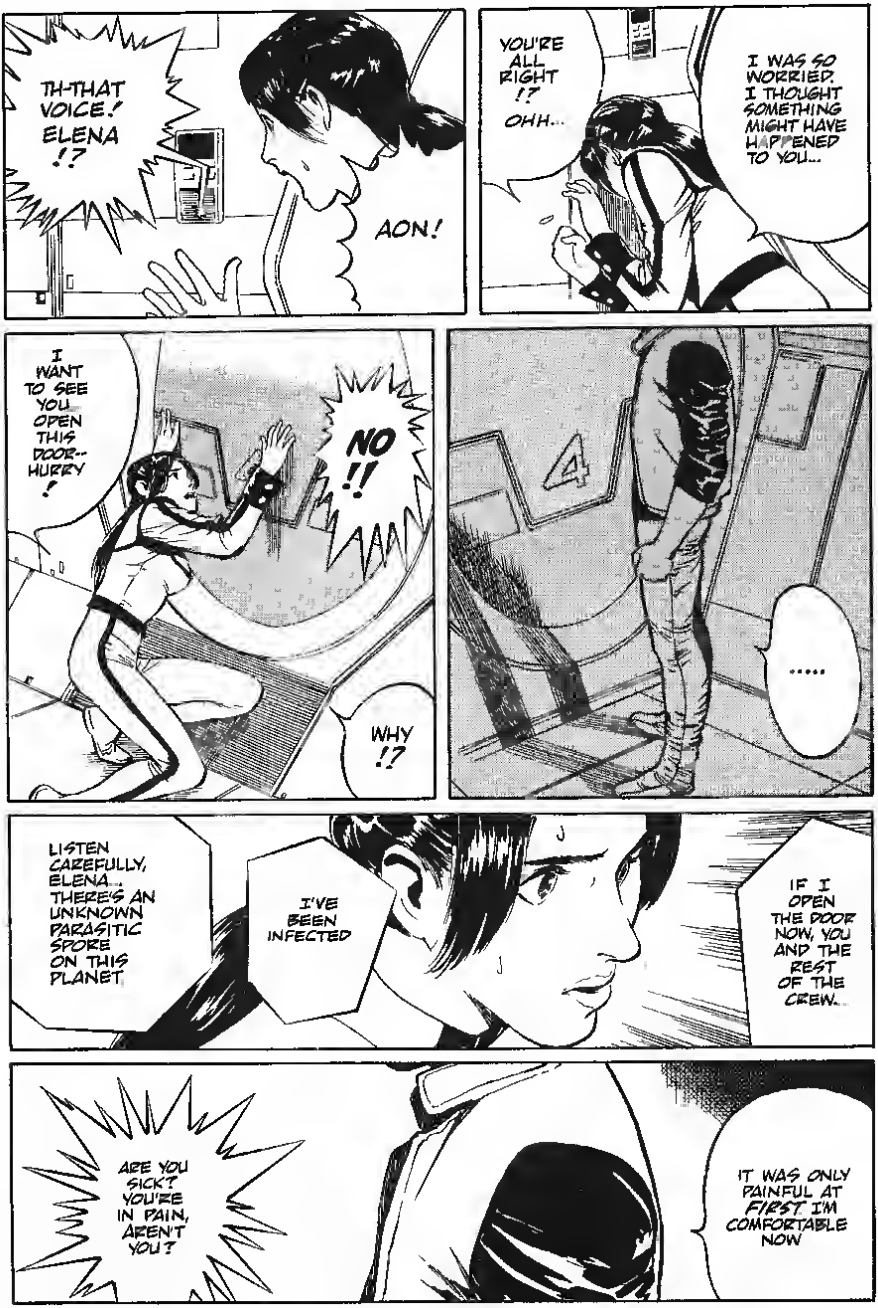
MAJOR MEDVELOVA REFUSES TO USE ENGLISH AS THE COMMON LANGUAGE, SO, AS INTERPRETER, I WILL SPEAK ON HER BEHALF
THIS IS THE EURASIAN COLONY'S NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF BETA HYDRI FIVE
FIRST OF ALL, WE MUST SWEEP AWAY ALL THE BACTERIA AND HARMFUL ORGANISMS THAT COVER THE EUROPA CONTINENT THROUGH A RAZING OPERATION...
...AND SECURE IT AS A LARGE GRANARY REGION AND RESIDENTIAL AREA...
AS FOR WATER FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND, WE CAN USE THE HUGE BODY OF UNDERGROUND WATER BENEATH THE CONTINENTAL BASE ROCK.
THE DANGER EXISTS OF THIS UNDERGROUND WATER DAMAGING FUTURE MINING OPERATIONS
THEREFORE, OUR PLAN IS TO PUMP THE WATER UP TO A LARGE ARTIFICIAL LAKE ON THE SURFACE.

THE LARGE SWAMP AREA IN THE NORTHERN SECTION SHOULD WORK WELL FOR THIS PURPOSE. WE CAN CREATE A CRATER USING S.N.T. EXPLOSIVE...
...AND THEN LEAD A NUMBER OF RIVERS OFF IT FOR IRRIGATION. WE COULD CALL THEM THE "VOLGA" OR THE "RHINE" OR WHAT HAVE YOU...
WE CAN STOCK THE ARTIFICIAL LAKE WITH FISH, AND USE THE WATER THAT FALLS INTO THE OCEAN OF HIGH-PRESSURE GAS TO GENERATE HYDRO-ELECTRICITY.
FINALLY, THE RIVERS WILL FLOW INTO THE DRIED-UP SEA BED, INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF SEA WATER AND EXPANDING THE AREA OF THE PLANET'S EVAPORATION SURFACE.
THE "RHINE RIVER," EH? DON'T YOU MEAN THE "LINE"?
RIVERS REPRESENT BORDERS.
...DEPENDING ON HOW YOU DRAW THE RIVERS, YOU CAN ESTABLISH "TERRITORIES" ANY WAY YOU WANT TO!
RESOURCES, CLIMATE, SOIL QUALITY--INEQUITIES ARE SURE TO APPEAR IN TIME!
AS HEAD SCIENTIST, I'M ALSO OPPOSED!
THIS PLANET HAS A COMPLETELY FOREIGN ECOLOGY!
IF YOU CARRY OUT SUCH LARGE-SCALE MODIFICATION PROJECTS, YOU COULD MAKE A MESS OF THE CLIMATE--THE WHOLE ECOSYSTEM!

BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND-- THERE ISN'T AN AQUIFER NEAR OUR COLONY !
HOW CAN WE COLONIZE WITHOUT WATER ?!
THAT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH US !
THEN IF YOU STILL REFUSE...
..WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION ON OUR OWN.
B-BY SHEER FORCE, IF NECESSARY !
AGGRESSION ! SUPERPOWER ARROGANCE !
YOU INTENDED TO IGNORE THE NEGO-TIATIONS FROM THE START !
WHAT A SHOW OF BAD FAITH !
peep peep peep
AAH, PARDON ME IT'S TIME FOR ME TO TAKE MY HEART MEDICINE...
..I'M SURE WE ALL AGREE THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR A SINGLE COUNTRY TO DEVELOP AN ENTIRE PLANET ALONE.
..SO WHY DON'T WE LISTEN TO THIS COLONY'S PLAN AFTER A LITTLE BREAK, HMM ?


PIKAARU... WHERE IS AON? WHY DOESN'T HE SHOW HIMSELF?
DOES THAT "HEART MEDICINE" OF YOURS WORK, COMMISSIONER HANEY?
IT'S A FINE 2109 BORDEAUX, KEHLE-- OF COURSE IT WORKS!
IT'S A WATER FIGHT, ISN'T IT.?
JUST LIKE THE OLD WEST, WATER WILL BE THE MAIN BATTLE-FRONT OF SPACE DEVELOPMENT!
HUMAN BEINGS CAN TURN ANY PLANET INTO A WARZONE. THEY NEVER CHANGE.
THE MEDIATING REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS ARE STILL AS POWERLESS AS EVER..

SOMETHING'LL COME OF IT SOONER OR LATER...
THAT'S THE WAY THESE THINGS ARE.
THE WAY THEY ARE NOW, HUMAN BEINGS ARE LIKE A PATHOGEN OR A PARASITE.
JUST WHEN THEY'VE COMPLETELY RAIDED THE HOST THEY CALL EARTH...
...THEY GO INTO ECSTASIES OVER THE UNFORESEEN LUCIFER AND HYPERSPACE TRAVEL, AND HEAD PELL-MELL INTO THE UNIVERSE...
...IN SEARCH OF A NEW HOST...
LIKE A BACTERIAL SPORE DANCING IN THE WIND.. DON'T YOU THINK SO?
AON! ARE YOU IN THERE? AON, ANSWER ME!
HMM -
SO YOU THINK THAT THE "GREAT ADVANCE" WILL STAIN ALL OF SPACE THE COLOR OF HUMANITY... ?
ISN'T THAT AN EVEN MORE CONCEITED NOTION ?

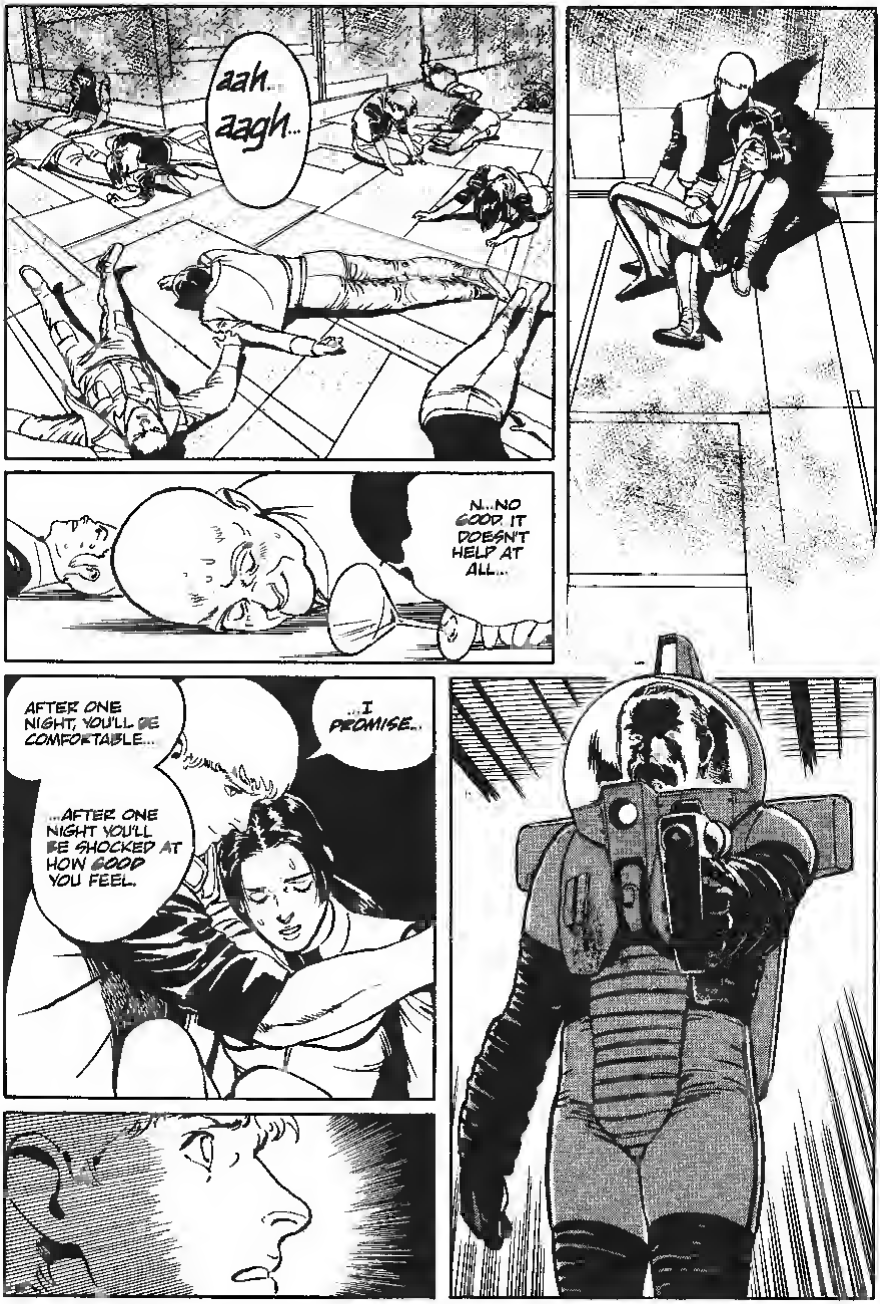

TH-THAT VOICE! ELENA !?
AON!
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT !? OHH...
I WAS SO WORRIED. I THOUGHT SOMETHING MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU...
I WANT TO SEE YOU. OPEN THIS DOOR-- HURRY !
NO !!
WHY !?
4
.....
LISTEN CAREFULLY, ELENA... THERE'S AN UNKNOWN PARASITIC SPORE ON THIS PLANET.
I'VE BEEN INFECTED
IF I OPEN THE DOOR NOW, YOU AND THE REST OF THE CREW...
ARE YOU SICK? YOU'RE IN PAIN, AREN'T YOU?
IT WAS ONLY PAINFUL AT FIRST. I'M COMFORTABLE NOW

I'VE BEEN EXAMINING MYSELF THE WHOLE TIME-- THERE'S NOTHING UNUSUAL WITH MY BODY AT ALL.
BUT IF I DON'T MAKE ABSOLUTELY SURE, THE PLANS FOR THE COLONY WILL BE RUINED... THAT'S WHAT MAJOR BERUCHIN SAID..
YOU MEAN YOU'RE A GUINEA PIG !?
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO BE LOCKED UP!?
UNTIL YOU DIE !?
NO...
...NO, AON!
WHO'S THERE!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING !?
BAM BAM
I'M OPENING THE DOOR, AON! I DON'T CARE IF I'M INFECTED!
4
ZZZNNN
ST-STOP! NO, ELENA!

BREEEEEP
BREEEEEP
WHAT IS IT!?
THE LABORATORY!

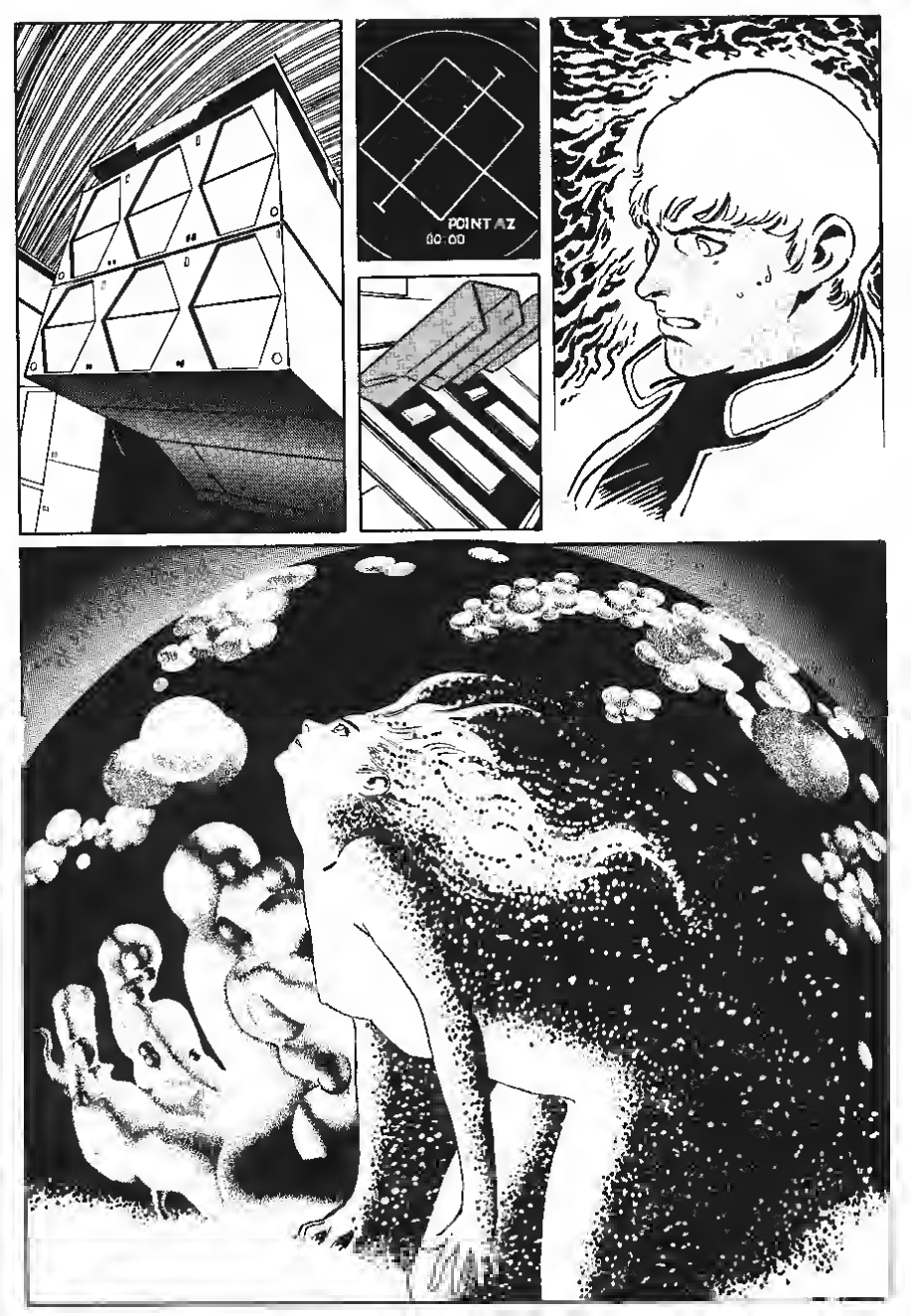
SHOOT--
--SHOOT HIM DEAD!
...IT'S TOO LATE...
THAT'S RIGHT...
THE MOMENT ELENA OPENED THE LOCK, SPORES HAD ALREADY SPREAD THROUGH THE ENTIRE COLONY...
WH-WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ELENA..?
WHAT IS THIS!?
WITHDRAW!
TH-THIS COLONY IS CONTAM-INATED!

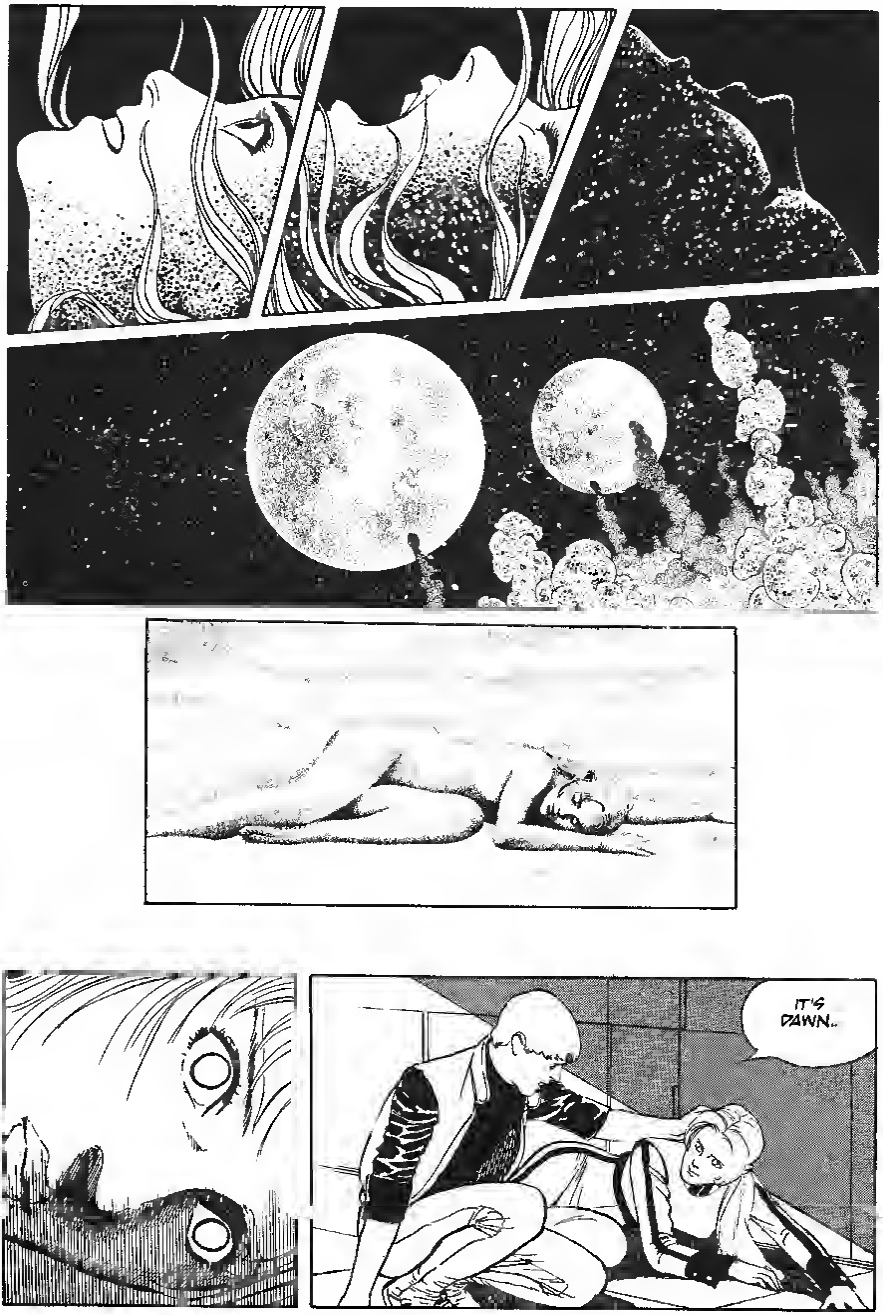
uuugh...
WRRRR
CHANCE!? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
--WE MUST RAZE THE CONTAMINATED COLONY...!
DON'T YOU SEE, MAJOR?
OUR CHANCE TO FRUSTRATE THE WESTS ADVANCE AND CARRY FORWARD OUR PLAN ALL AT ONCE--


aah...
aagh...
N...NO GOOD. IT DOESN'T HELP AT ALL...
AFTER ONE NIGHT, YOU'LL BE COMFORTABLE...
...I PROMISE...
...AFTER ONE NIGHT YOU'LL BE SHOCKED AT HOW GOOD YOU FEEL.

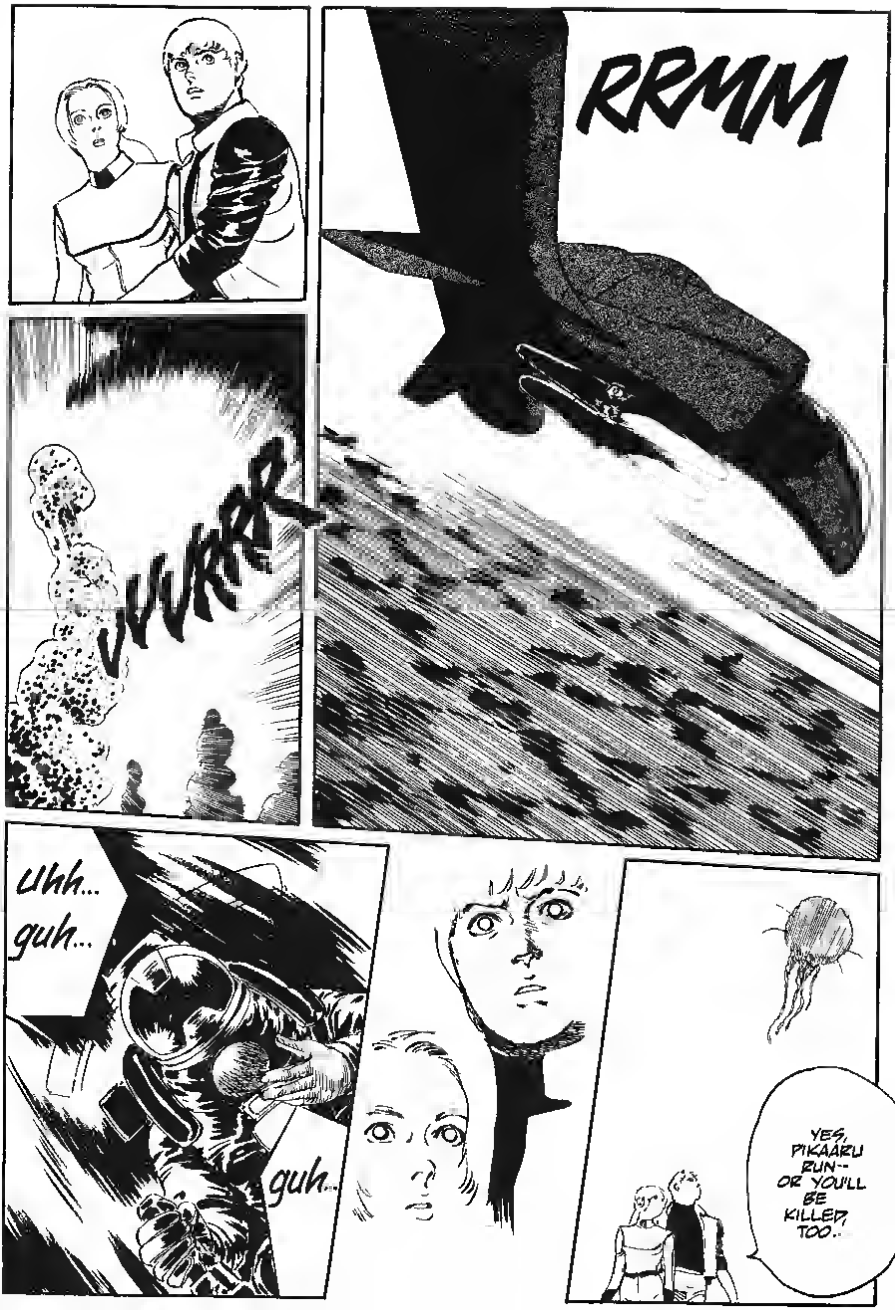
WHOO
I...
AON...
...THE INTERCEPTOR MISSILE SYSTEM...
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?
TH-THE EURASIAN COLONY'S SURE TO ATTACK...
IF THEY GET US NOW, EVERYONE WILL BE KILLED
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN MOVE... THE MISSILES..
EVERYONE... KILLED...!?

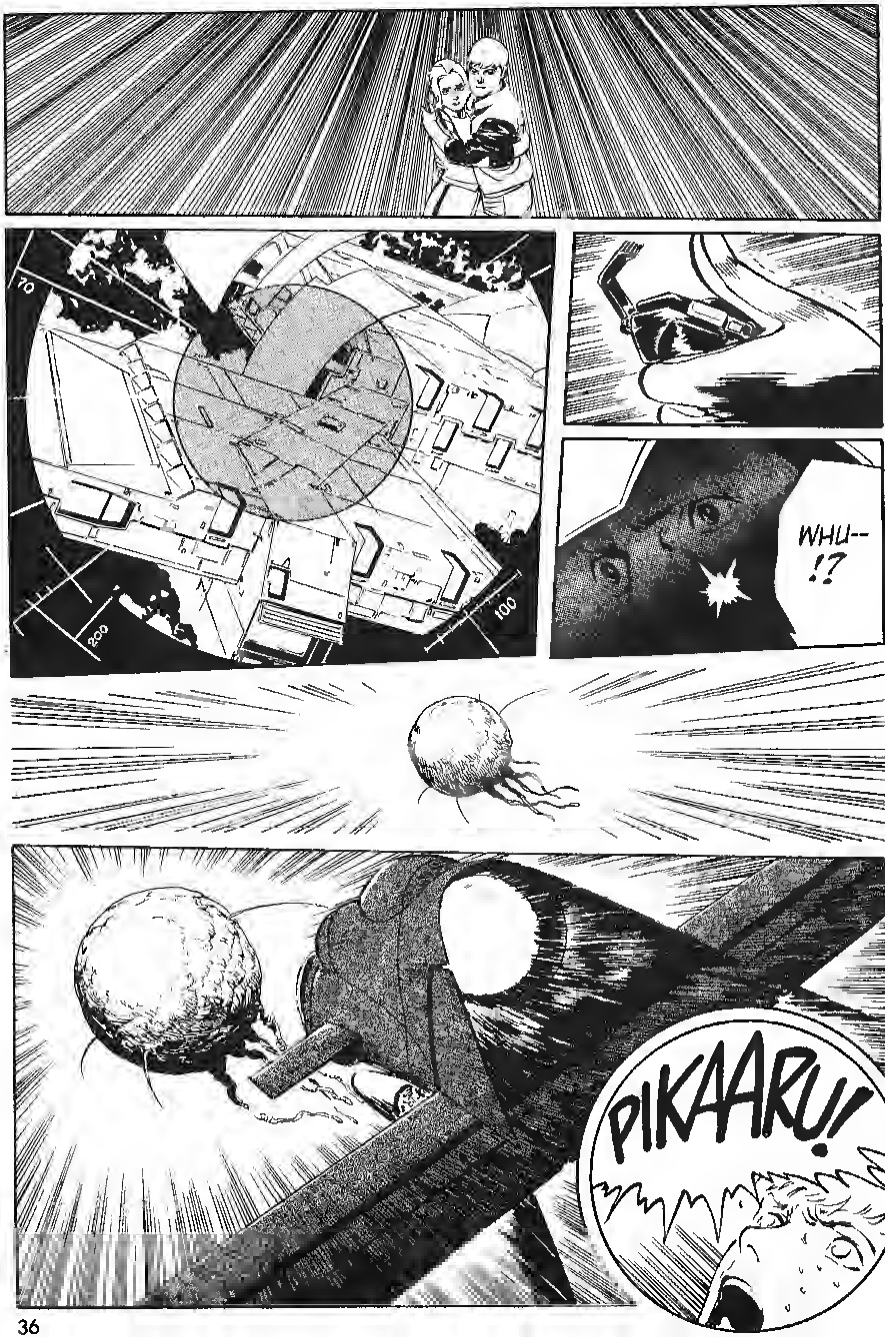
SHIT
KRAK
I...
AON...


POINT AZ
00:00

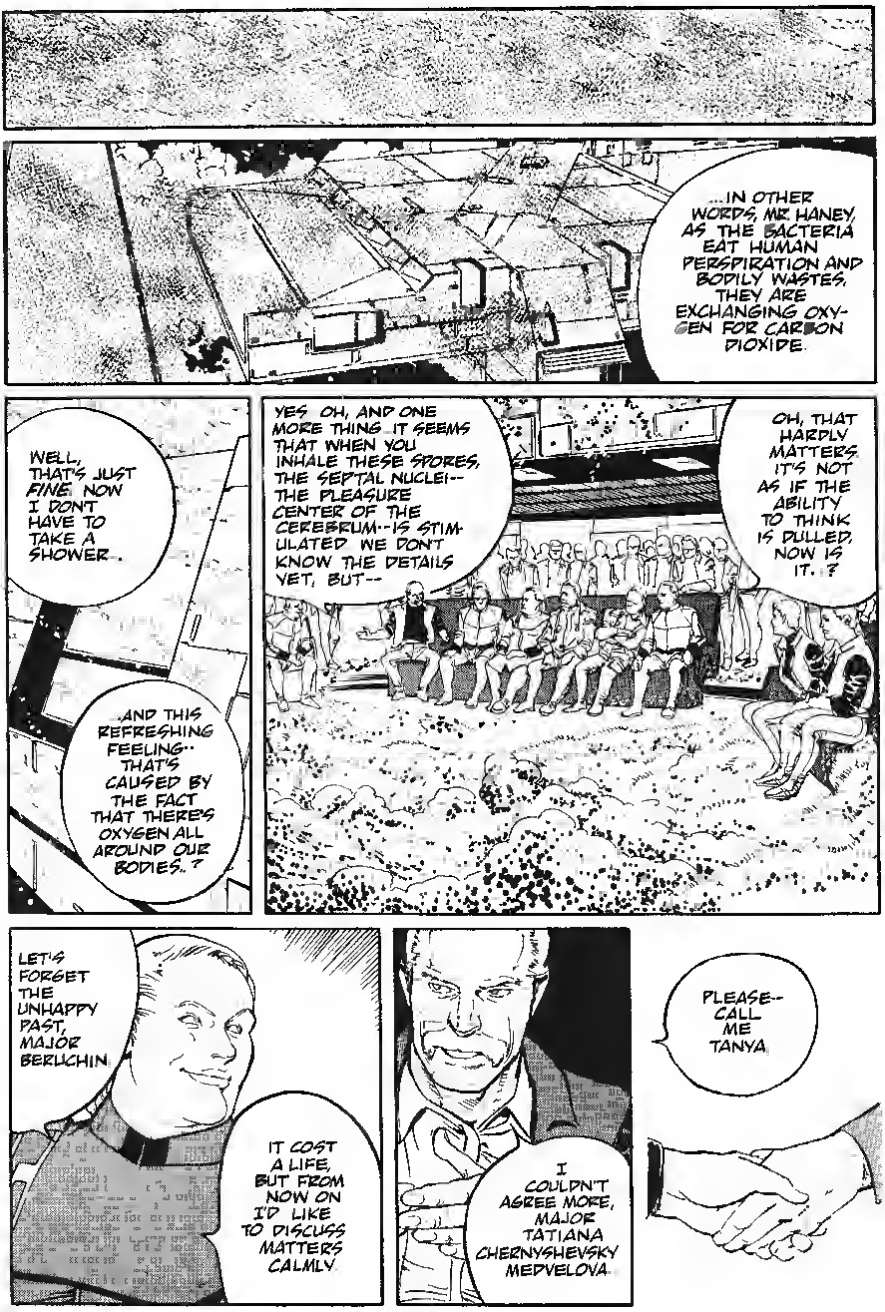

IT'S DAWN..

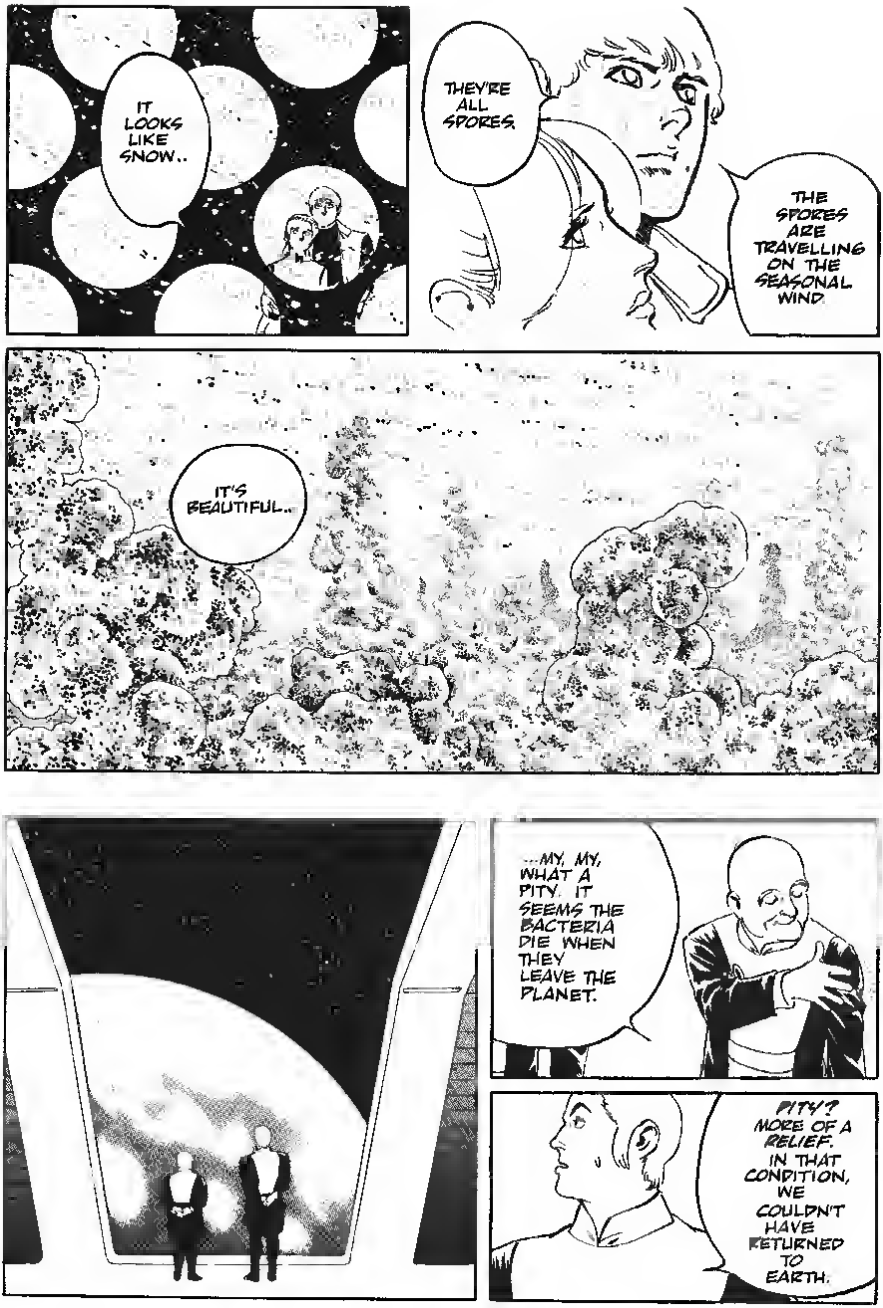
THE EURASIAN COLONY WAS PROBABLY CONTAMINATED, TOO.
ZZZNNN
ZZZNNN
BUT EVEN IF THEY HAD ATTACKED, I COULDN'T HAVE PUSHED THE BUTTON.
GOOD MORNING, PIKAARU...
WRRRR

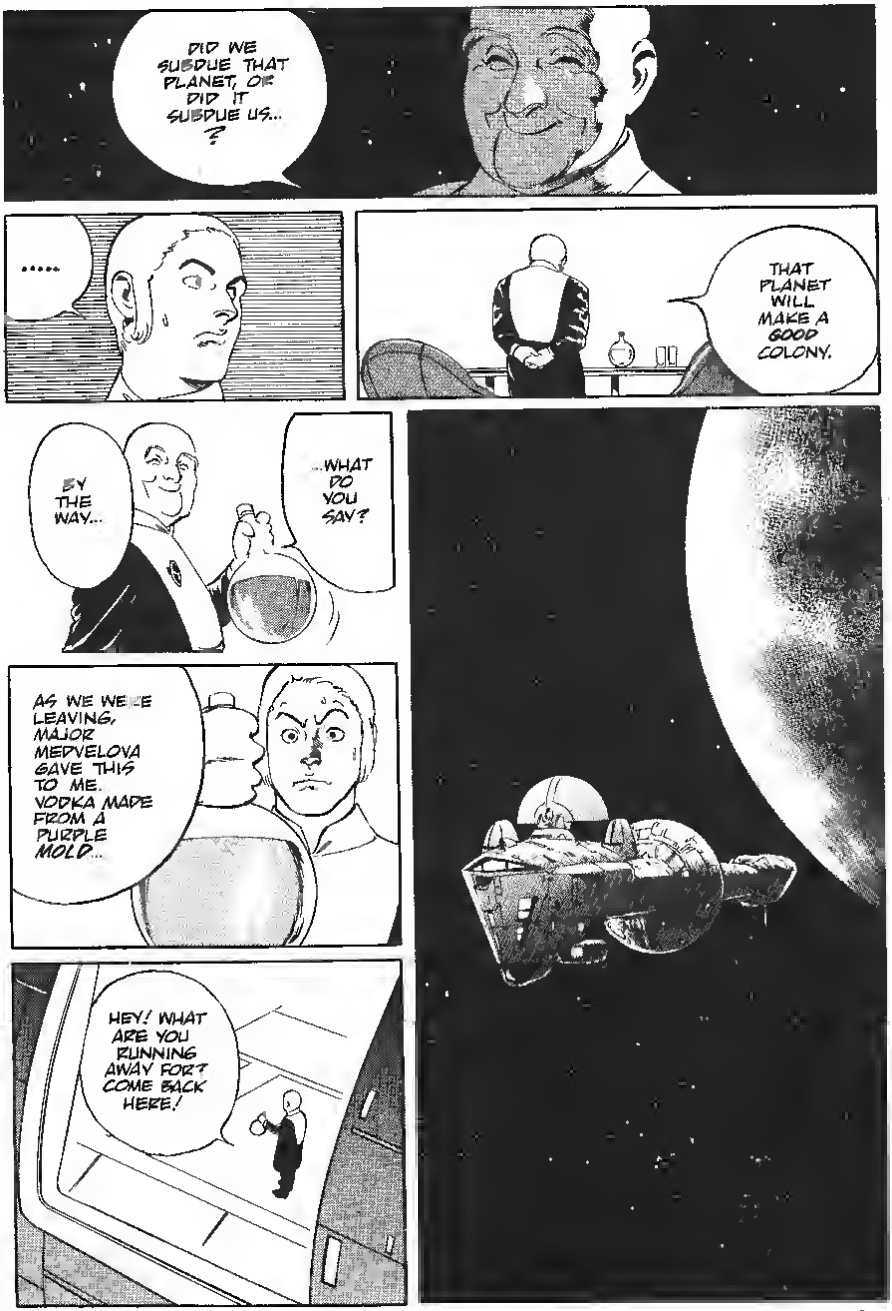

RRMM
VVURRR
uhh...
guh...
guh..
YES, PIKAARU RUN-- OR YOU'LL BE KILLED, TOO..


WHU--
!?
PIKAARU!

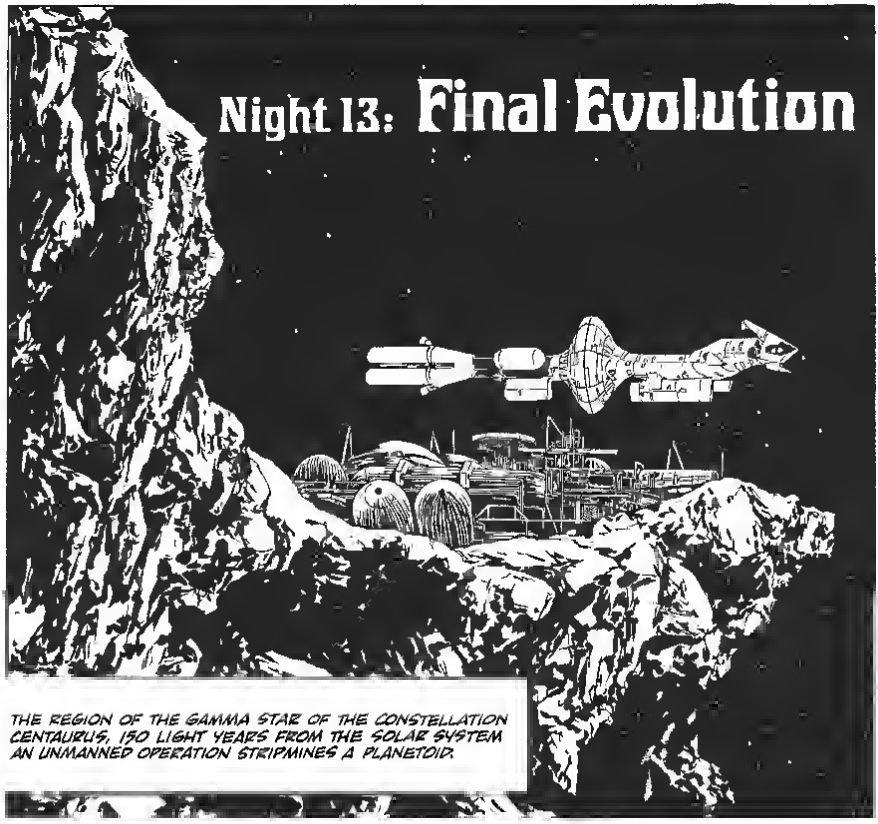
KABLAMM
PIKAARU..


...IN OTHER WORDS, MR. HANEY, AS THE BACTERIA EAT HUMAN PERSPIRATION AND BODILY WASTES, THEY ARE EXCHANGING OXYGEN FOR CARBON DIOXIDE.
WELL, THAT'S JUST FINE. NOW I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE A SHOWER..
YES. OH, AND ONE MORE THING. IT SEEMS THAT WHEN YOU INHALE THESE SPORES, THE SEPTAL NUCLEI-- THE PLEASURE CENTER OF THE CEREBRUM--IS STIMULATED. WE DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS YET, BUT--
OH, THAT HARDLY MATTERS. IT'S NOT AS IF THE ABILITY TO THINK IS PULLED, NOW IS IT..?
..AND THIS REFRESHING FEELING.. THAT'S CAUSED BY THE FACT THAT THERE'S OXYGEN ALL AROUND OUR BODIES..?
LET'S FORGET THE UNHAPPY PAST, MAJOR BERLICHIN.
IT COST A LIFE, BUT FROM NOW ON I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS MATTERS CALMLY.
I COULDN'T AGREE MORE, MAJOR TATIANA CHERNYSHEVSKY MEDVELOVA.
PLEASE-- CALL ME TANYA.

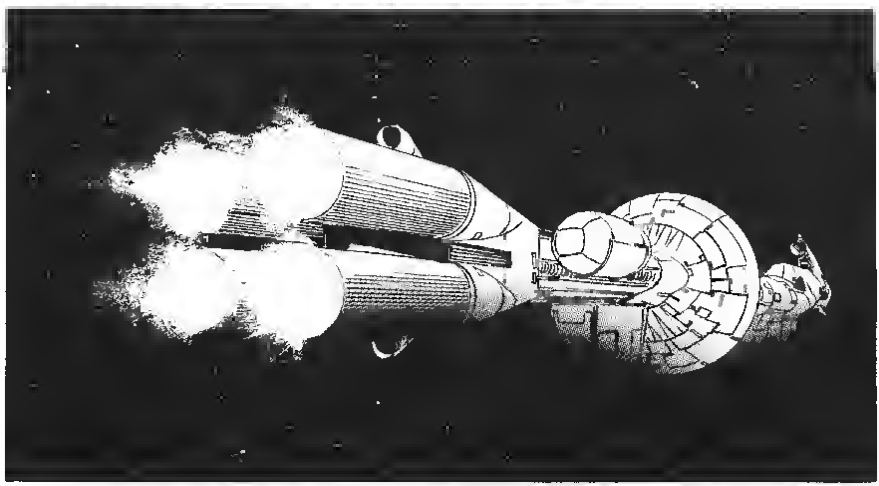

IT LOOKS LIKE SNOW..
THEY'RE ALL SPORES.
THE SPORES ARE TRAVELLING ON THE SEASONAL WIND.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL..
...MY, MY, WHAT A PITY. IT SEEMS THE BACTERIA DIE WHEN THEY LEAVE THE PLANET.
PITY? MORE OF A RELIEF. IN THAT CONDITION, WE COULDN'T HAVE RETURNED TO EARTH.

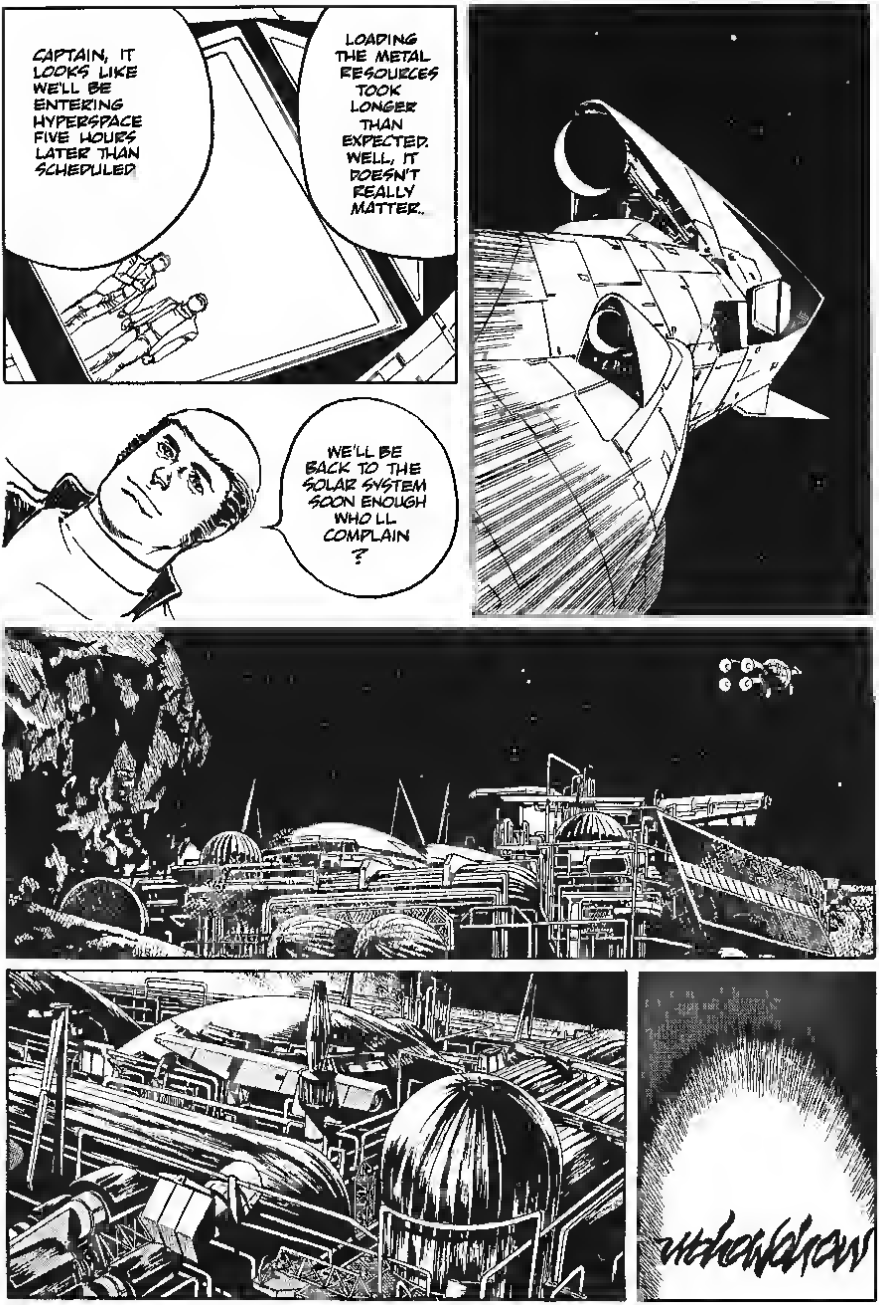

DID WE SUBDUE THAT PLANET, OR DID IT SUBDUE US...?
.....
THAT PLANET WILL MAKE A GOOD COLONY.
BY THE WAY...
...WHAT DO YOU SAY?
AS WE WERE LEAVING, MAJOR MEDVELOVA GAVE THIS TO ME. VODKA MADE FROM A PURPLE MOLD...
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY FOR? COME BACK HERE!

Night 13: Final Evolution

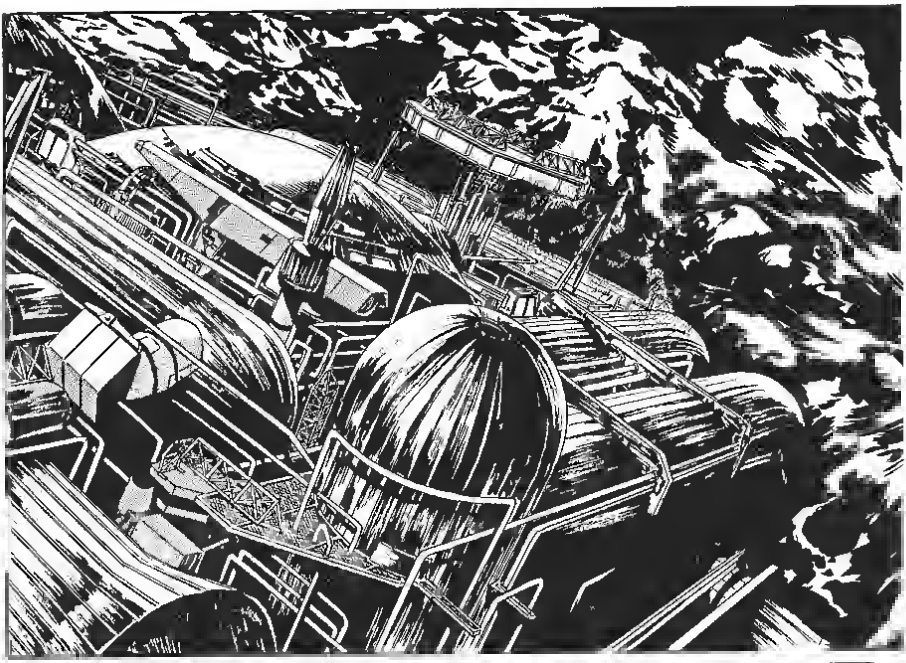


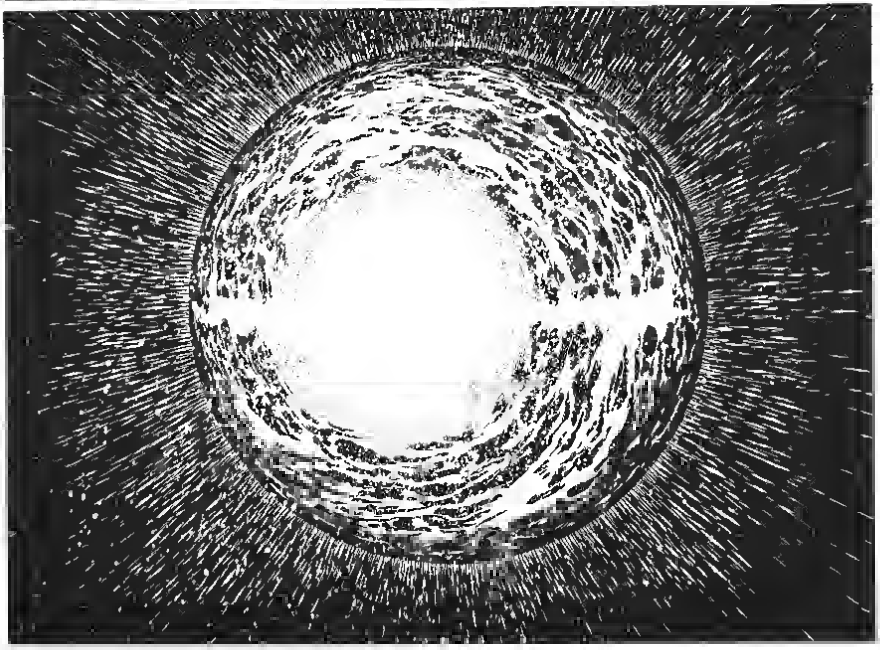
THE REGION OF THE GAMMA STAR OF THE CONSTELLATION CENTAURUS, 150 LIGHT YEARS FROM THE SOLAR SYSTEM AN UNMANNED OPERATION STRIPMINES A PLANETOID.

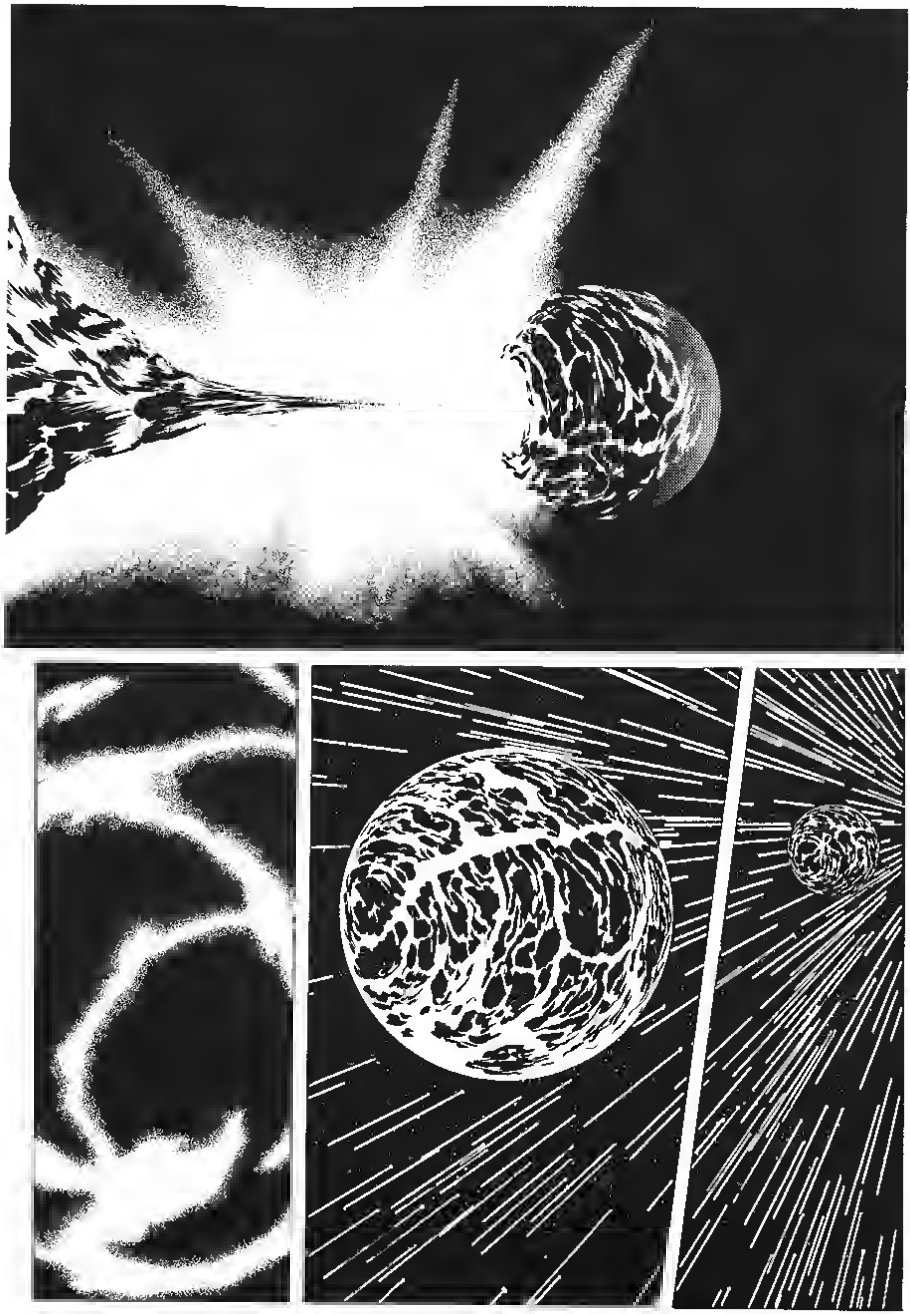



CAPTAIN, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE ENTERING HYPERSPACE FIVE HOURS LATER THAN SCHEDULED
LOADING THE METAL RESOURCES TOOK LONGER THAN EXPECTED. WELL, IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER..
WE'LL BE BACK TO THE SOLAR SYSTEM SOON ENOUGH WHO'LL COMPLAIN ?

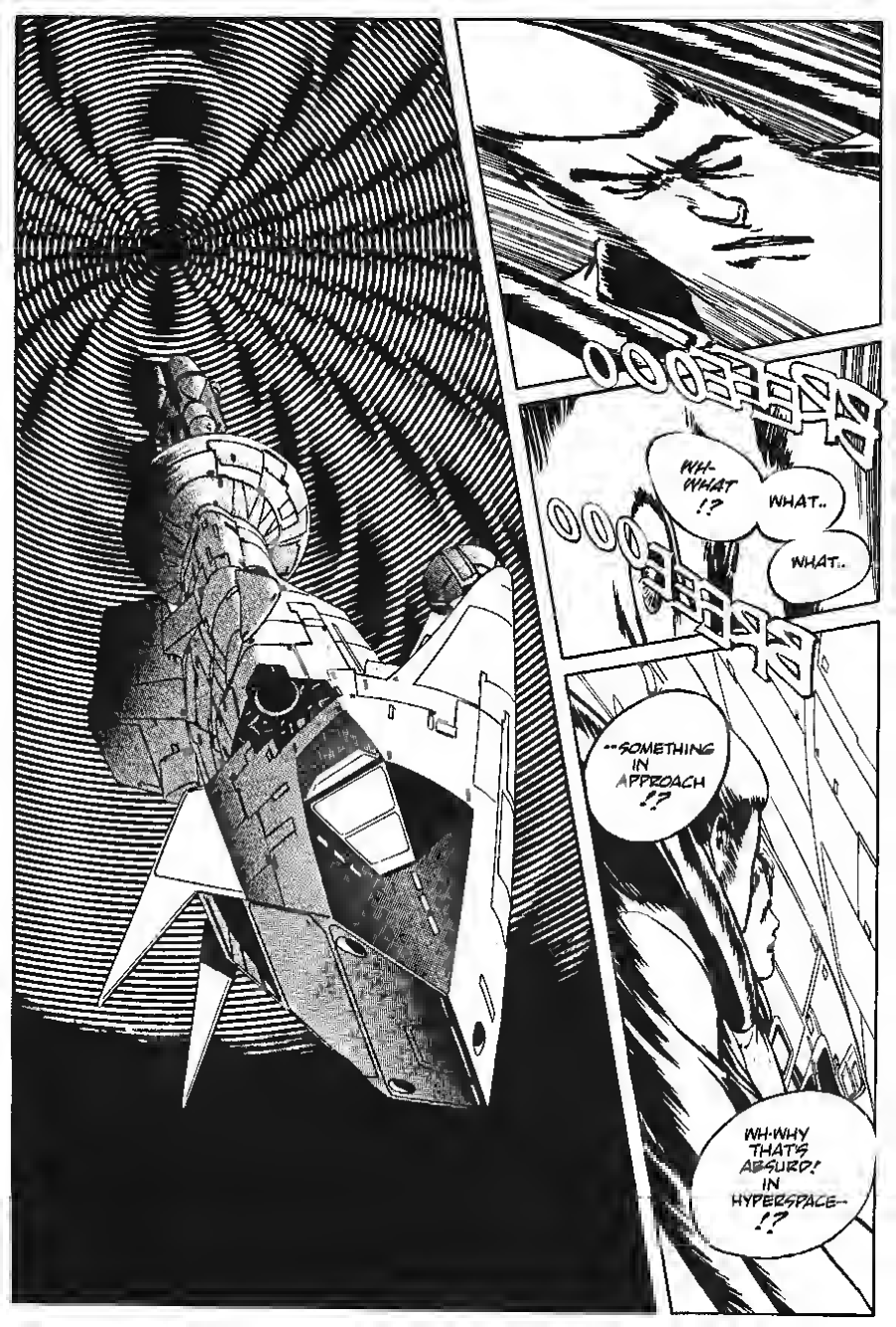
BREEEOOO
BREEEOOO
BREEEOOO
RMBRMB
BREEEOOO
BREEEOOO
BLAM!

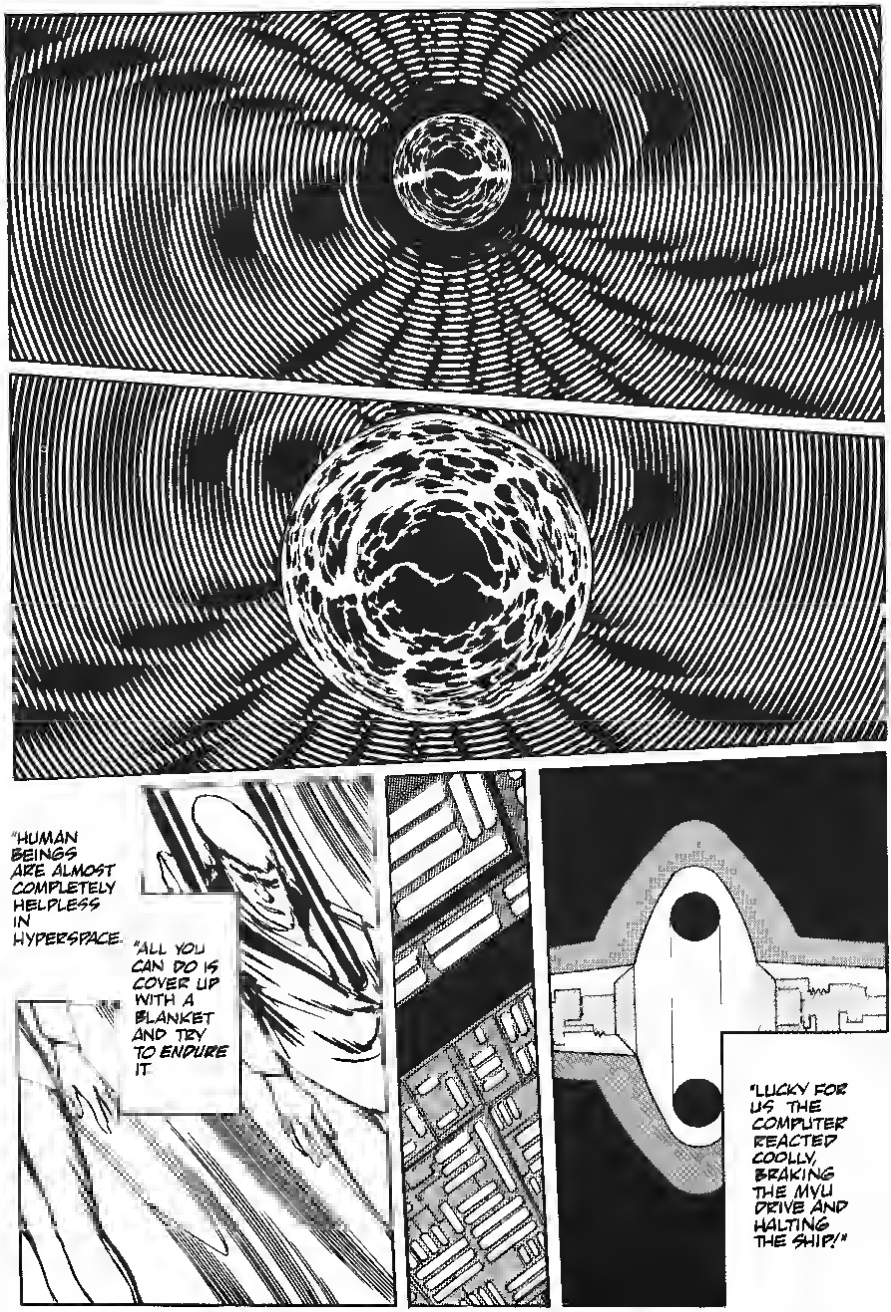


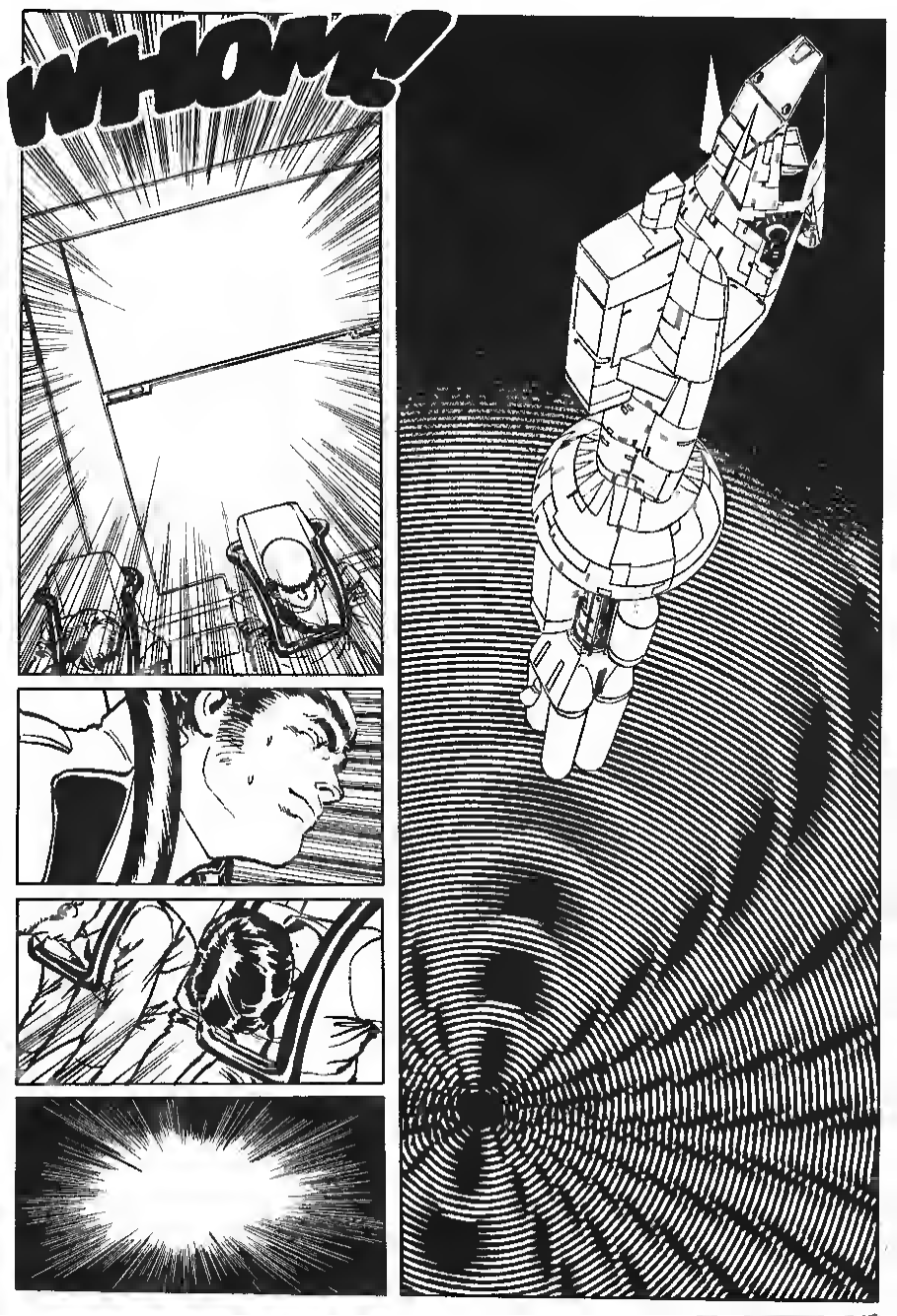


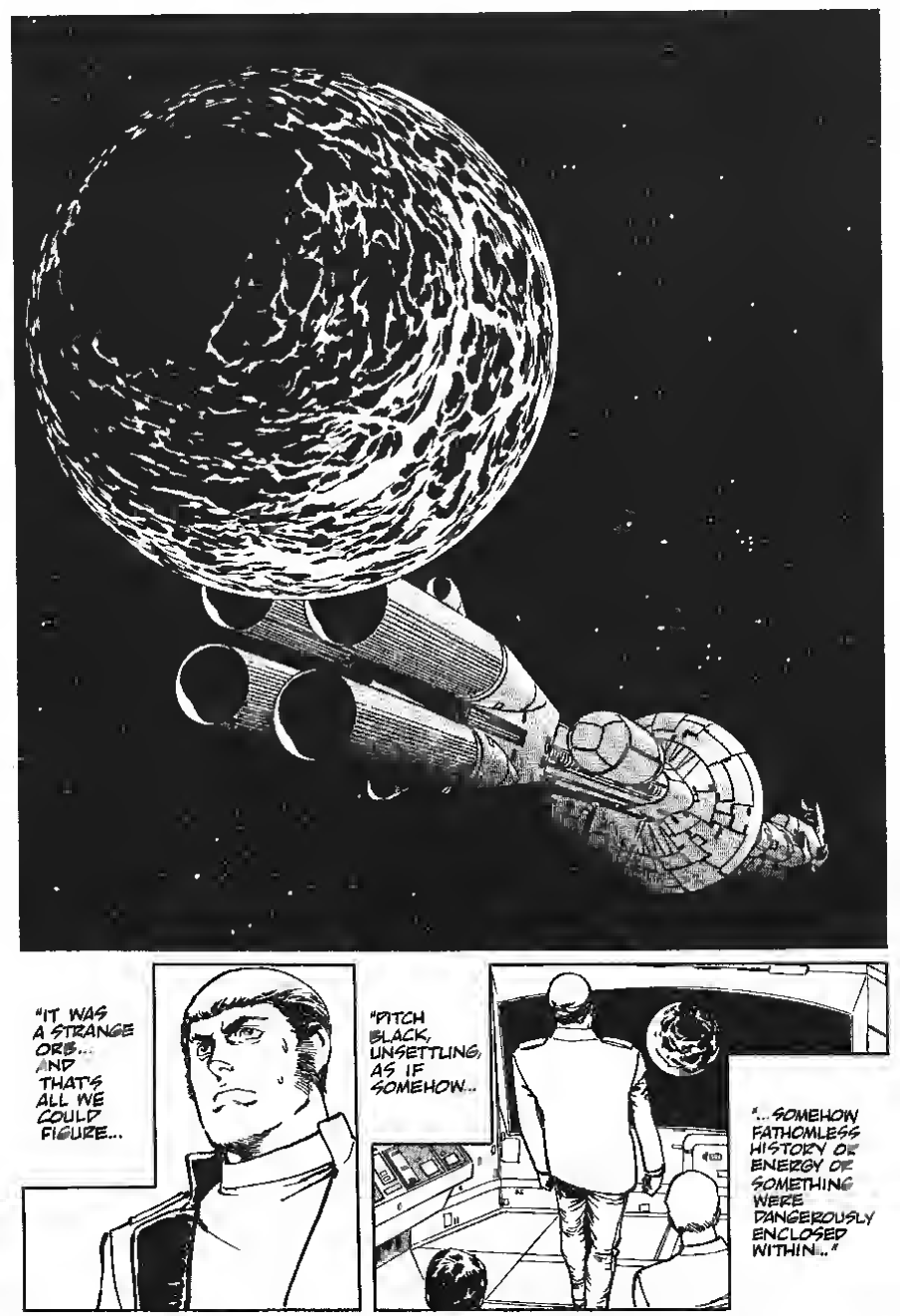


YOUR NAME AND RANK ?
COMMANDER BRENNAN SULLIVAN--
--CAPTAIN OF THE INTERSTELLAR FREIGHTER PROXIMA.
.....
I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT SOMETHING HAD OCCURRED AT THE UNMANNED EXCAVATION SITE IMMEDIATELY AFTER OUR SHIP LEFT.
THE PROXIMA HAD MOVED INTO HYPERSPACE AND WAS LEAPING ACROSS 150 LIGHT YEARS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

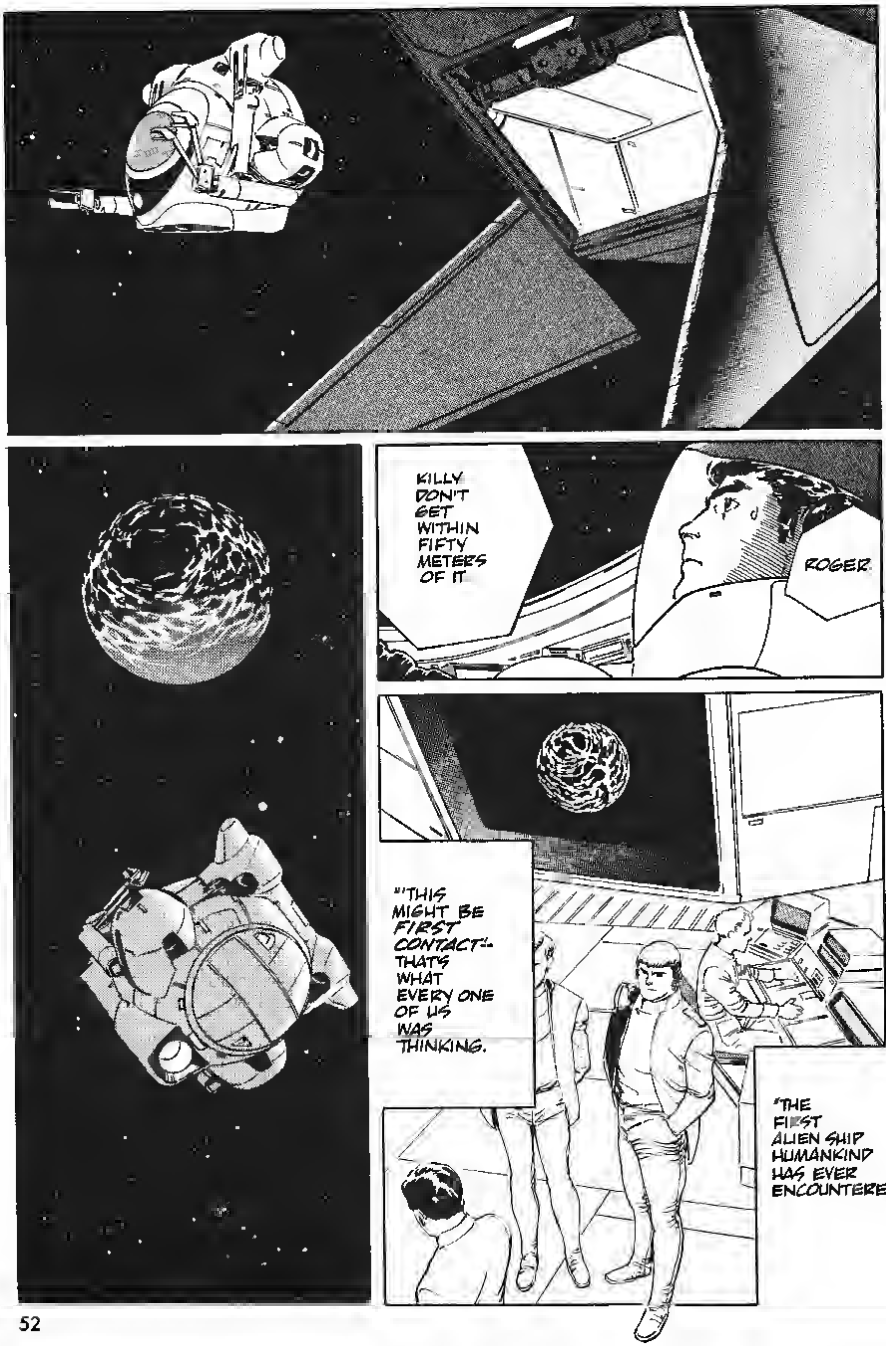

WH-WHAT !?
WHAT..
WHAT..
--SOMETHING IN APPROACH !?
WH-WHY THAT'S ABSURD! IN HYPERSPACE--!?


"HUMAN BEINGS ARE ALMOST COMPLETELY HELPLESS IN HYPERSPACE.
"ALL YOU CAN DO IS COVER UP WITH A BLANKET AND TRY TO ENDURE IT.
"LUCKY FOR US THE COMPUTER REACTED COOLLY, BRAKING THE MYU DRIVE AND HALTING THE SHIP!"


WHOOK!


"IT WAS A STRANGE ORB... AND THAT'S ALL WE COULD FIGURE...
"PITCH BLACK, UNSETTLING, AS IF SOMEHOW...
"... SOMEHOW FATHOMLESS HISTORY OR ENERGY OR SOMETHING WERE DANGEROUSLY ENCLOSED WITHIN..."

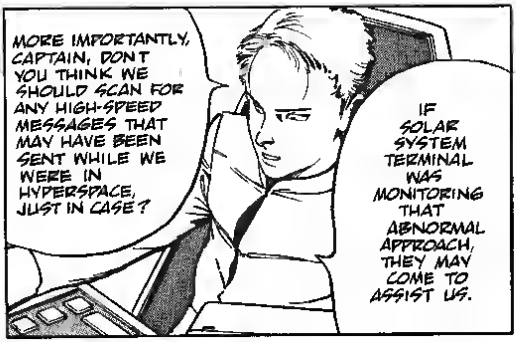
WE ARE PRESENTLY IN INTERSTELLAR SPACE ZERO POINT NINE LIGHT YEARS FROM THE SOLAR SYSTEM CAPTAIN
IT SEEMS THAT THE EMERGENCY BRAKING CAUSED SOME DAMAGE TO THE REAR STORAGE SECTION. KOBAYASHI HAS GONE TO INSPECT
IS THIS ALL THE INFO YOU'VE GOT ON THAT THING, HARRY ?
YES SIR THIRTY METERS IN DIAMETER-- SEEMS AWFULLY ROUND FOR A PLANETOID
CAN A PLANETOID JUMP THROUGH HYPERSPACE !?
UH, WELL, THEN-- A SHIP. ?


KILLY DON'T GET WITHIN FIFTY METERS OF IT.
ROGER.
"THIS MIGHT BE FIRST CONTACT"- THAT'S WHAT EVERY ONE OF US WAS THINKING.
'THE FIRST ALIEN SHIP HUMANKIND HAS EVER ENCOUNTERED..'

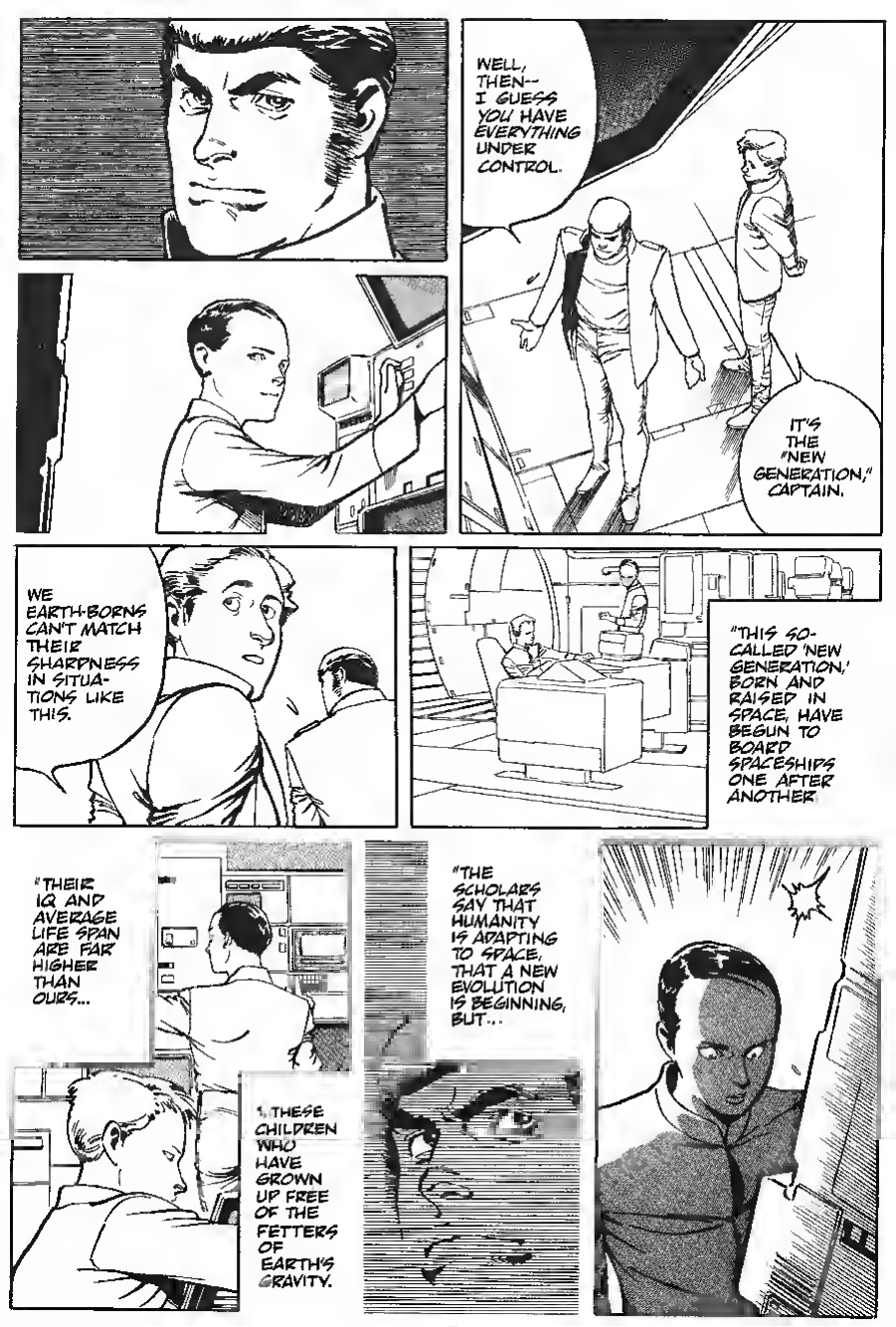
A E YOU SURE THIS IS ALL RIGHT-- HAVING A WORK POD APPROACH..?
THE SURFACE SEEMS TO BE A SUPER-HIGH-DENSITY ORGANIC MATERIAL. AN IRREGULAR PULSATION IS VISIBLE
WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET ANYWHERE BY STARING IT DOWN. WE NEED SOME KIND OF FRIENDLY GESTURE...
COMPUTER?
PULSATION?
THAT WHICH LOOKS LIKE A FLASH SIGNAL IS COMPLETELY UNANALYZABLE. ANY REGULARITY OR MEANING IS JUDGED TO BE EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL.
FOR AN ALIEN SHIP, IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE REACTING IN A PARTICULARLY INTELLIGENT WAY, CAPTAIN.
SHOULDN'T WE CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN A CELESTIAL BODY OR A SHIP..?
SUCH AS--?
SUCH AS A LIVING BEING, PERHAPS..

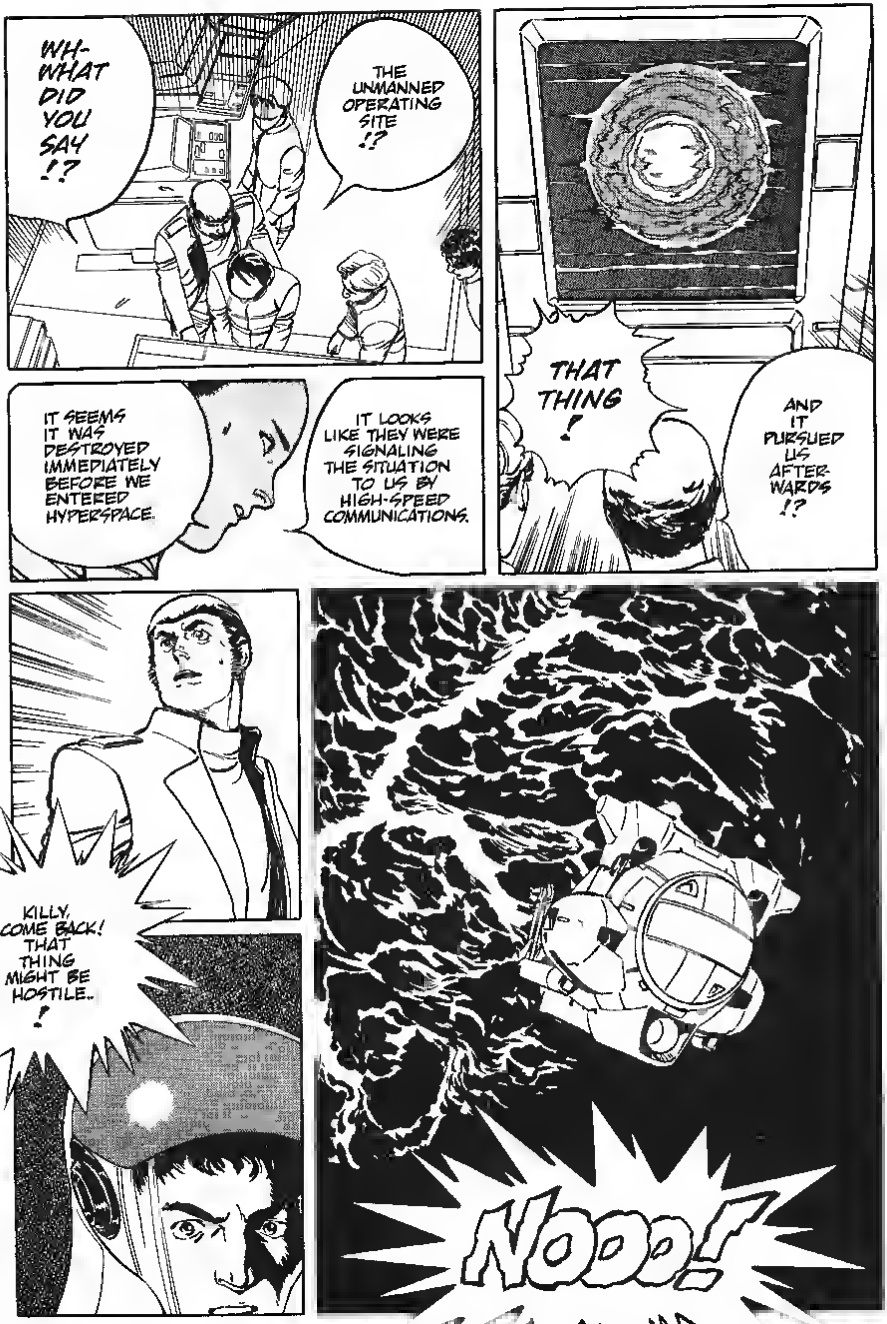
I'VE APPROACHED TO FIFTY METERS.
WHAT SHOULD I DO? TRY WAVING A WHITE FLAG OR SOMETHING?

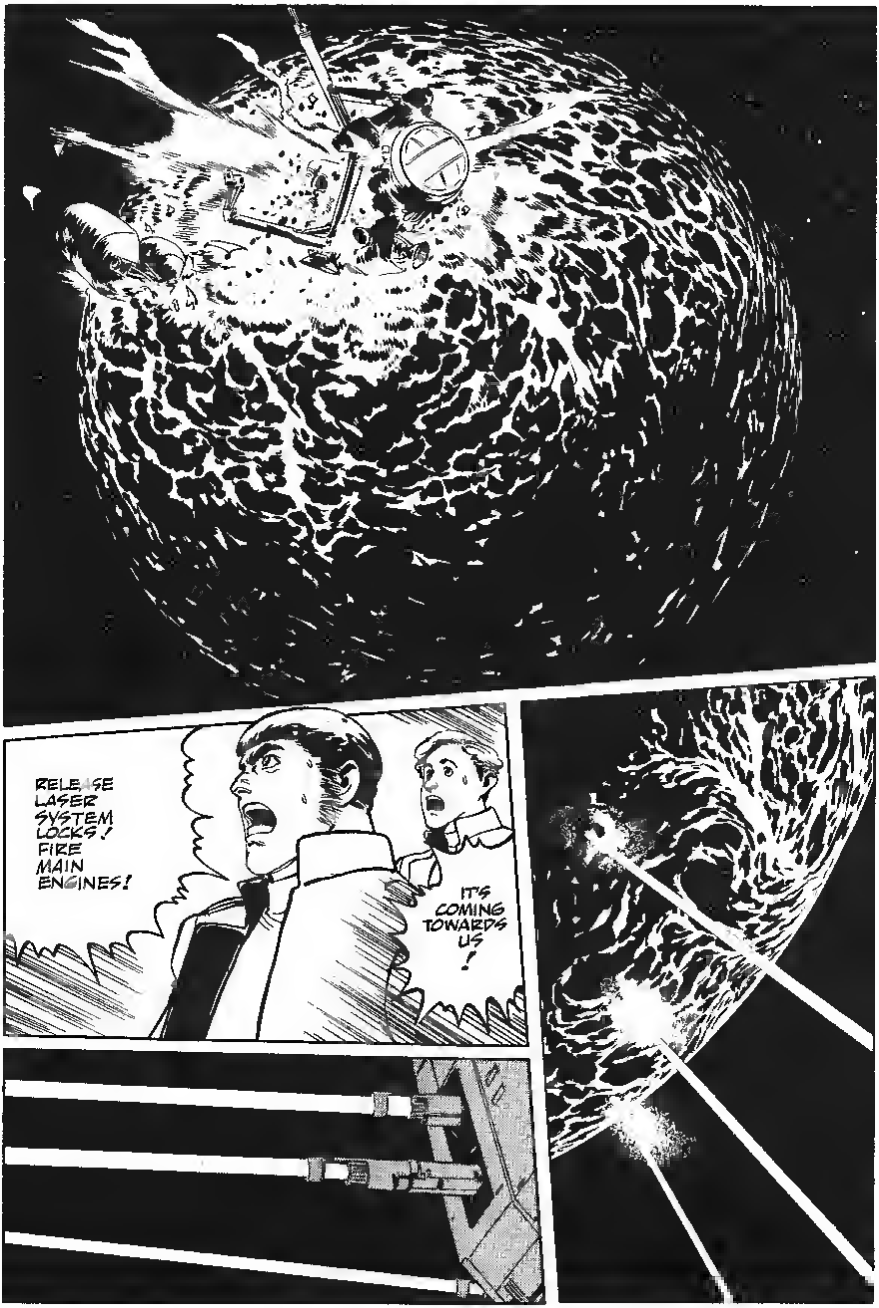
PROTON RADAR. AUGUSTUS, SEARCH ITS INTERIOR USING A TWO-POINT DIALYSIS WITH THE MAIN SHIP...
I'VE ALREADY BEGUN.

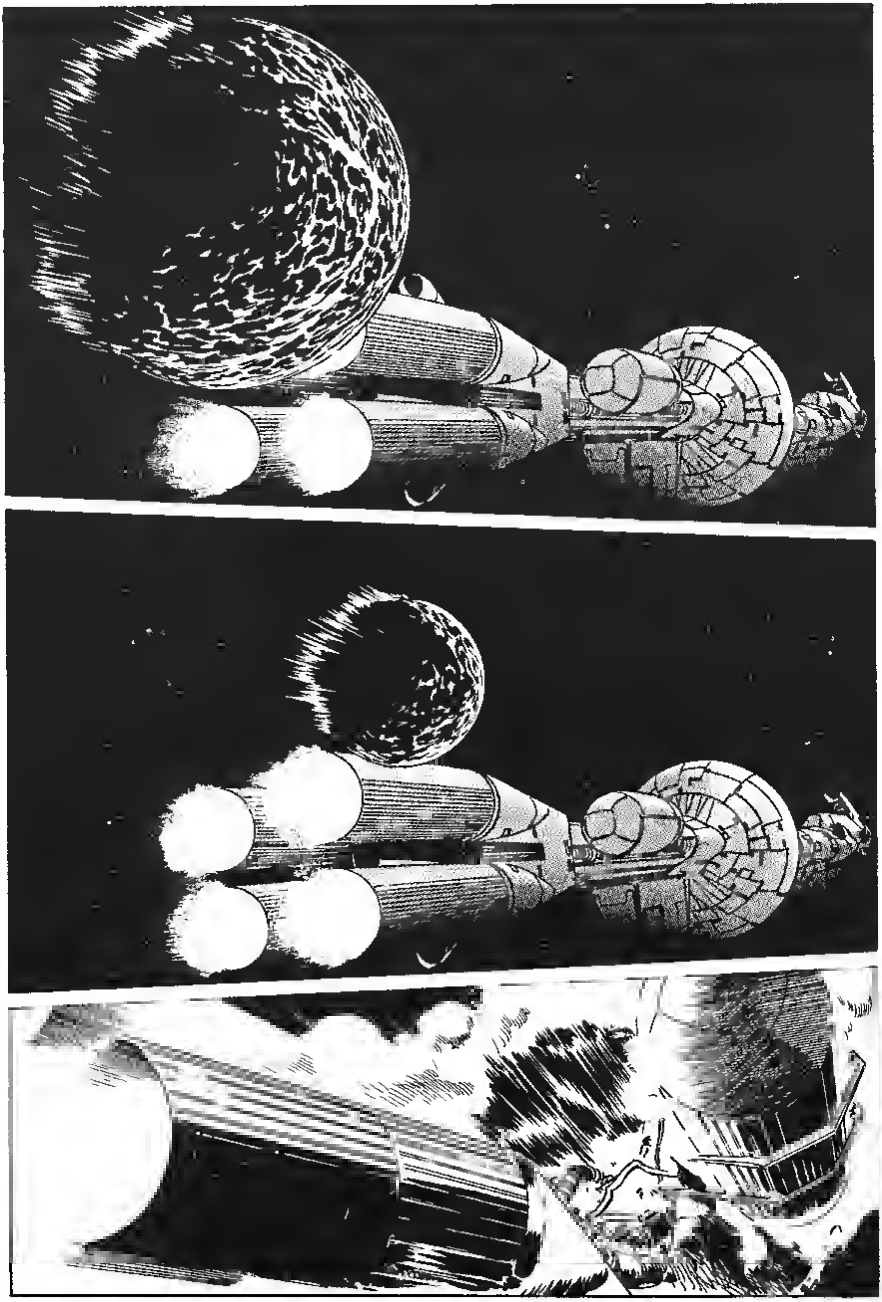

MORE IMPORTANTLY, CAPTAIN, DON'T YOU THINK WE SHOULD SCAN FOR ANY HIGH-SPEED MESSAGES THAT MAY HAVE BEEN SENT WHILE WE WERE IN HYPERSPACE, JUST IN CASE?
IF SOLAR SYSTEM TERMINAL WAS MONITORING THAT ABNORMAL APPROACH, THEY MAY COME TO ASSIST US.

THAT'S TRUE...
TROH IS ALREADY DOING IT.


WELL, THEN-- I GUESS YOU HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.
IT'S THE "NEW GENERATION," CAPTAIN.
WE EARTH-BORNS CAN'T MATCH THEIR SHARPNESS IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS.
"THIS SO-CALLED 'NEW GENERATION,' BORN AND RAISED IN SPACE, HAVE BEGUN TO BOARD SPACESHIPS ONE AFTER ANOTHER.
"THEIR IQ AND AVERAGE LIFE SPAN ARE FAR HIGHER THAN OURS...
"THESE CHILDREN WHO HAVE GROWN UP FREE OF THE FETTERS OF EARTH'S GRAVITY.
"THE SCHOLARS SAY THAT HUMANITY IS ADAPTING TO SPACE, THAT A NEW EVOLUTION IS BEGINNING, BUT...


WH-WHAT DID YOU SAY !?
THE UNMANNED OPERATING SITE !?
THAT THING !
AND IT PURSUED US AFTERWARDS !?
IT SEEMS IT WAS DESTROYED IMMEDIATELY BEFORE WE ENTERED HYPERSPACE.
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY WERE SIGNALING THE SITUATION TO US BY HIGH-SPEED COMMUNICATIONS.
KILLY, COME BACK! THAT THING MIGHT BE HOSTILE..
!
NOOO!


RELEASE LASER SYSTEM LOCKS! FIRE MAIN ENGINES!
IT'S COMING TOWARDS US!

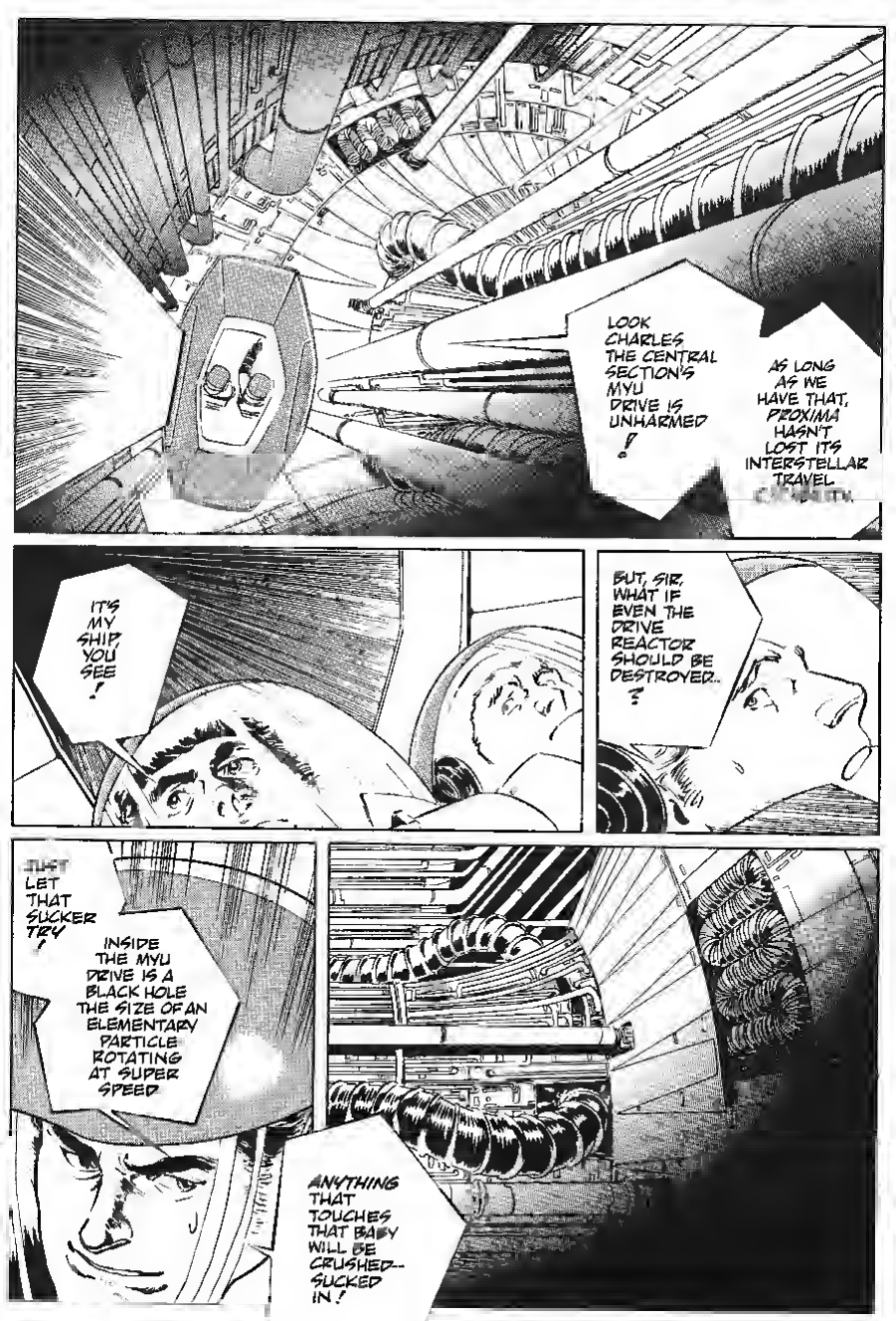


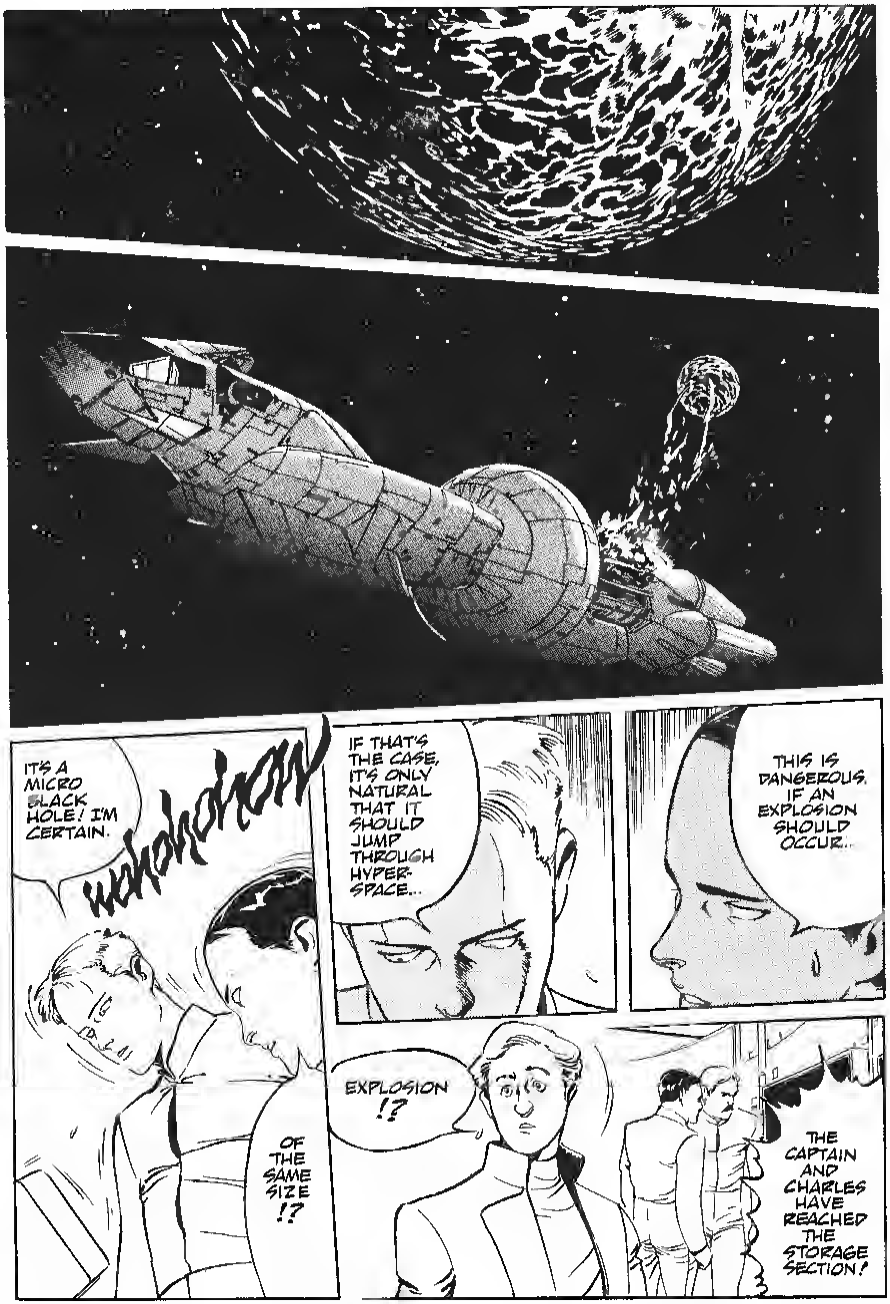
WHAM
BREEEEP!
COLLISION WITH THE PLASMA ENGINE SECTION! SERIOUS DAMAGE TO MAIN NOZZLE!
BREEEEP!
EVERYONE TO THE LIFE BLOCK! HURRY!
DEUTERIUM TANK HAS BEEN TORN AWAY! CONVENTIONAL PROPULSION SECTION HAS CEASED FUNCTIONING!
BREEEP!

WE FORGOT ABOUT KOBAYASHI! HE WAS IN THE REAR STORAGE SECTION!
LIFE BLOCK
HE-E HE IS! RIGHT NEXT TO THAT THING! I'LL GET HIM ON MONITOR.
C-CAPTAIN! THE DOORS WERE DAMAGED BY THE IMPACT... I'M LOCKED IN!
ARE YOU HURT? HANG ON! I'M COMING TO RESCUE YOU.
CHARLES, COME WITH ME. THE REST OF YOU STAY ON ALERT!
CAPTAIN..
..THIS SHIP HAS ALREADY LOST ITS ABILITY TO TRAVEL. I THINK WE SHOULD EVACUATE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

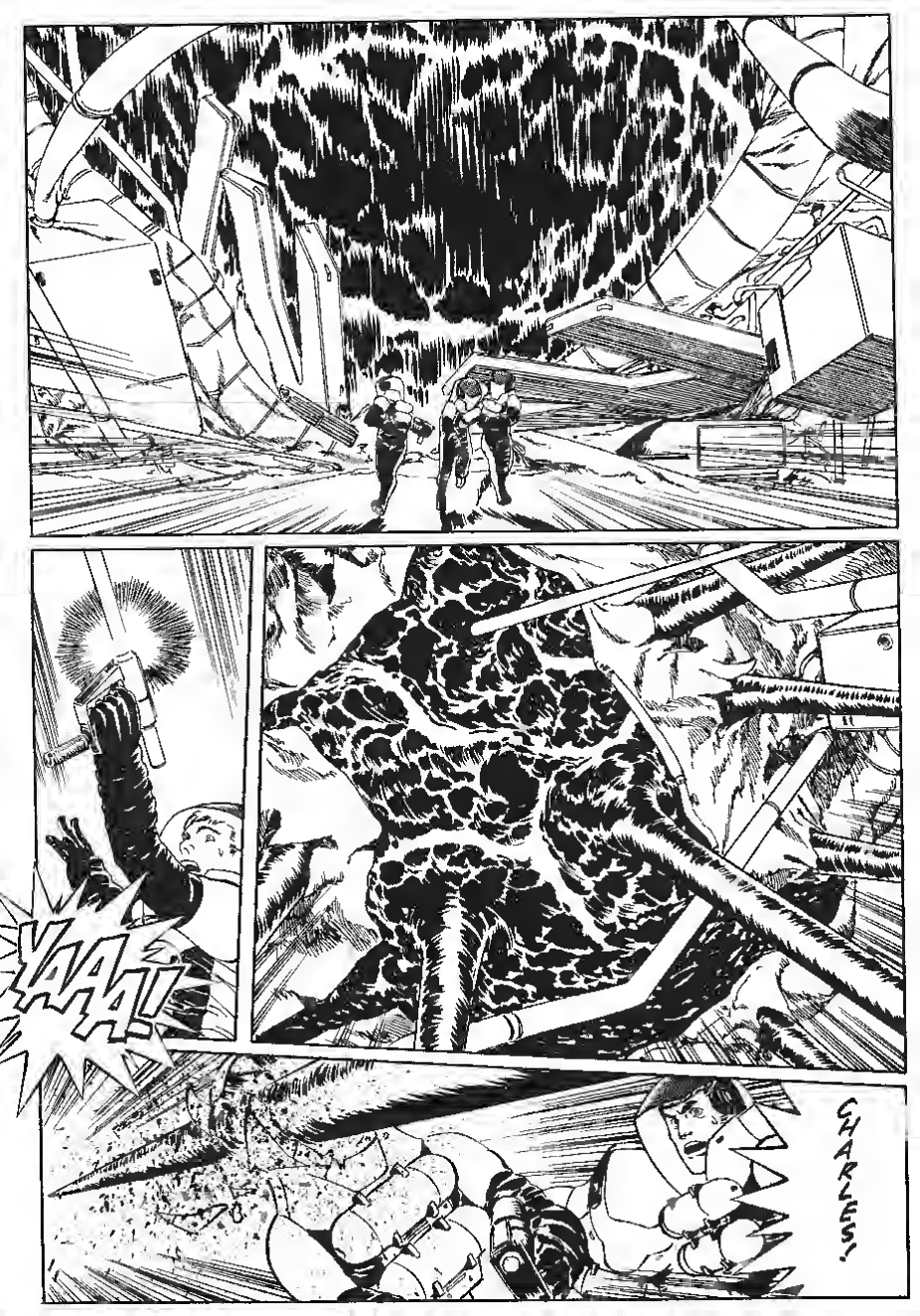
ARE YOU TELLING ME TO ABANDON SHIP !?
LEAVING A HUMAN BEING BEHIND !?
IF THAT ORB MOVES AGAIN, THERE WILL BE NO SAVING KOBAYASHI ANYWAY.
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY TO THE SAFETY OF THE REST OF THE CREW.
.....
THERE'S NO TIME TO ARGUE, CHARLES, LET'S GO!
YOU TAKE OVER HARRY. IF YOU JUDGE THE SITUATION TO BE DANGEROUS, GO AHEAD AND EJECT THIS LIFE BLOCK!
UH... AYE-AYE, SIR!

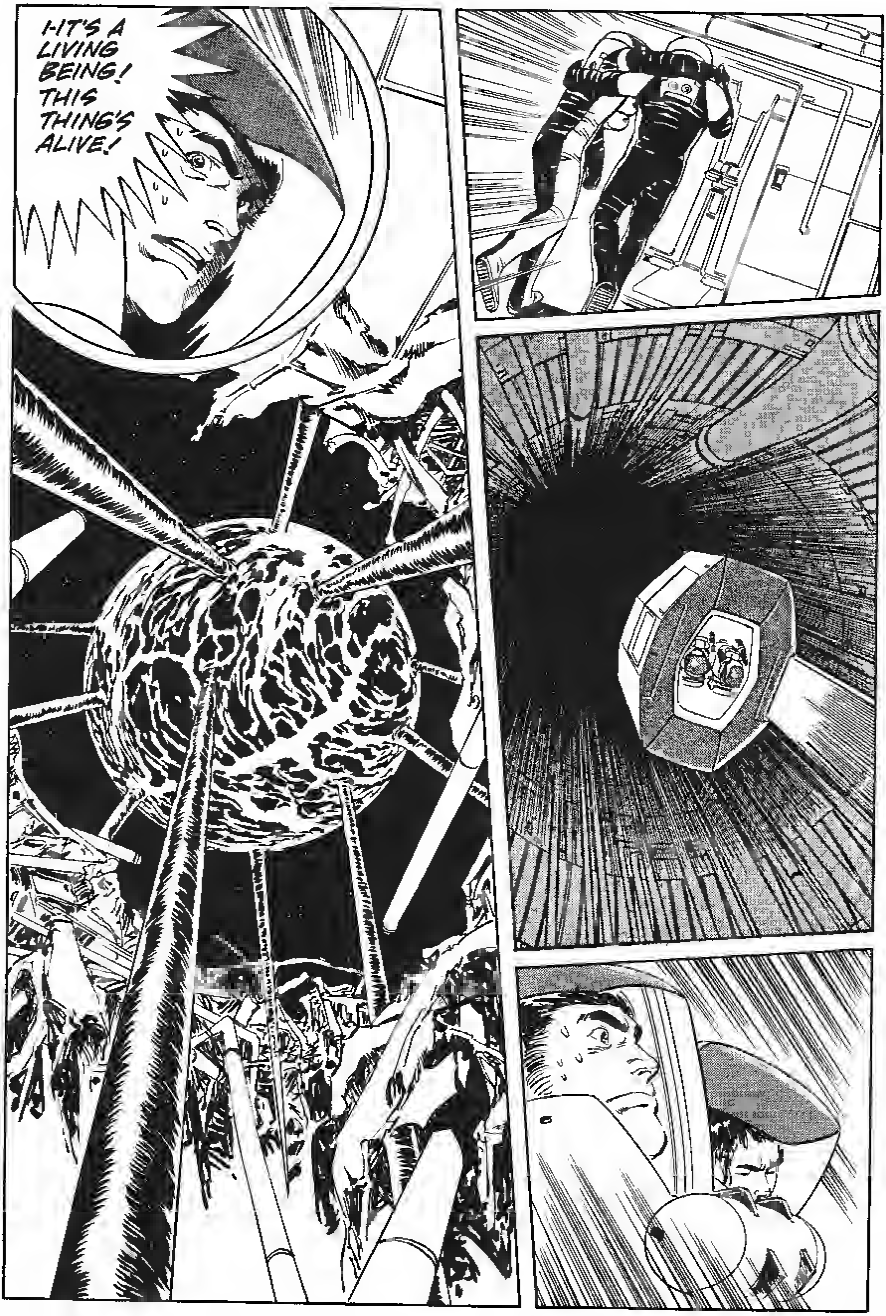
.....
WHEN THAT OBJECT STARTED TO MOVE, WE DETECTED A SUDDEN CHANGE IN GRAVITY WAVES
GRAVITY WAVES ?
IT SEEMS THAT THING CAN CHANGE ITS MASS AT WILL.
.....!
YOU TWO, PREPARE FOR THE WORST AND STAY IN YOUR SEATS.
WE JUST WANT TO MAKE A CALCULATION. FOR THE SAKE OF THE ENTIRE CREW.


LOOK CHARLES THE CENTRAL SECTION'S MYU DRIVE IS UNHARMED !
AS LONG AS WE HAVE THAT, PROXIMA HASN'T LOST ITS INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL CAPABILITY.
IT'S MY SHIP, YOU SEE !
BUT, SIR, WHAT IF EVEN THE DRIVE REACTOR SHOULD BE DESTROYED..?
JUST LET THAT SUCKER TRY !
INSIDE THE MYU DRIVE IS A BLACK HOLE THE SIZE OF AN ELEMENTARY PARTICLE ROTATING AT SUPER SPEED
ANYTHING THAT TOUCHES THAT BABY WILL BE CRUSHED-- SUCKED IN !

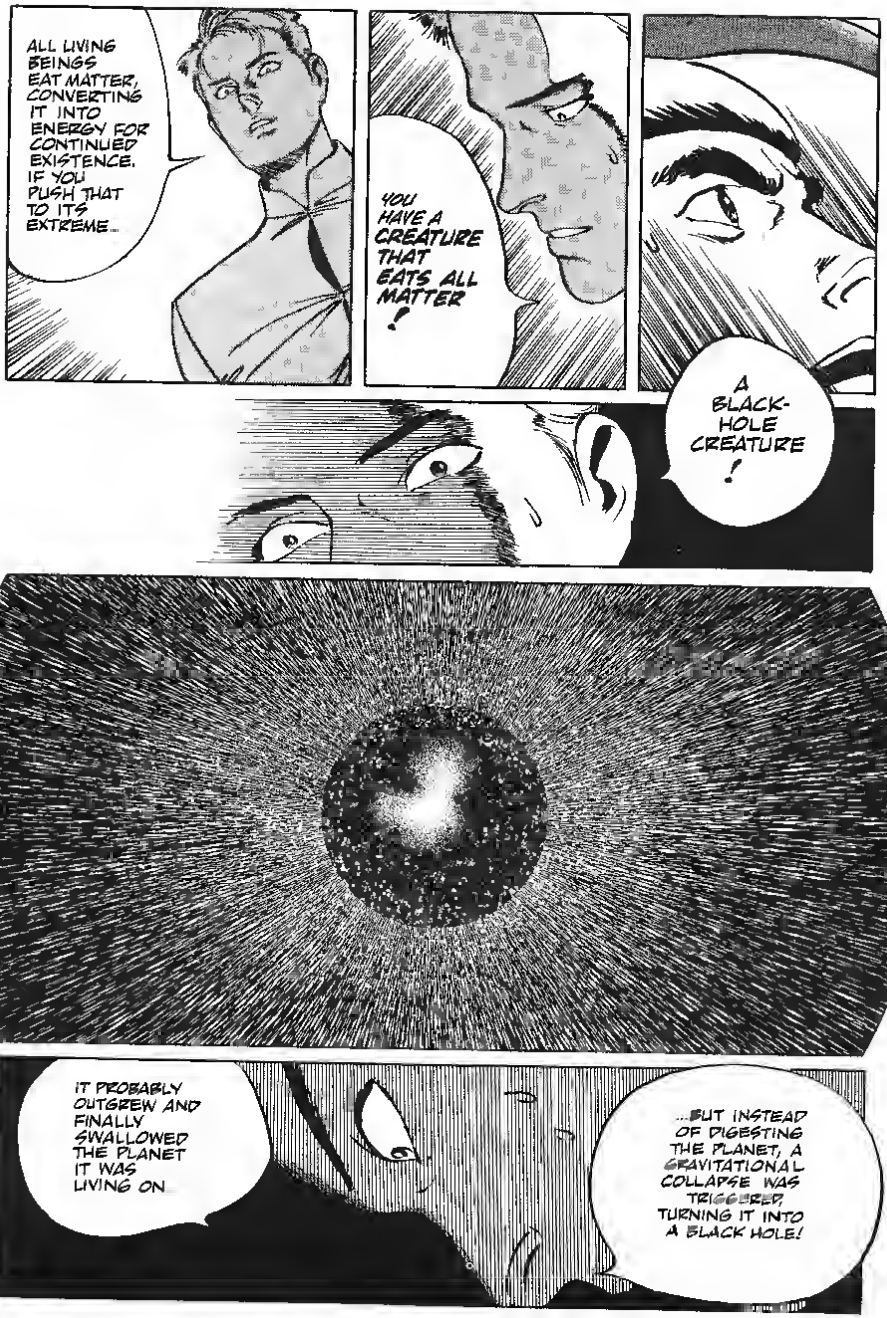

IT'S A MICRO BLACK HOLE! I'M CERTAIN.
WAKAKAKAN
OF THE SAME SIZE !?
IF THAT'S THE CASE, IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT IT SHOULD JUMP THROUGH HYPER-SPACE...
THIS IS DANGEROUS. IF AN EXPLOSION SHOULD OCCUR...
EXPLOSION !?
THE CAPTAIN AND CHARLES HAVE REACHED THE STORAGE SECTION!

KOBAYASHI
!
AKIRA


YAAA!
CHARLES!

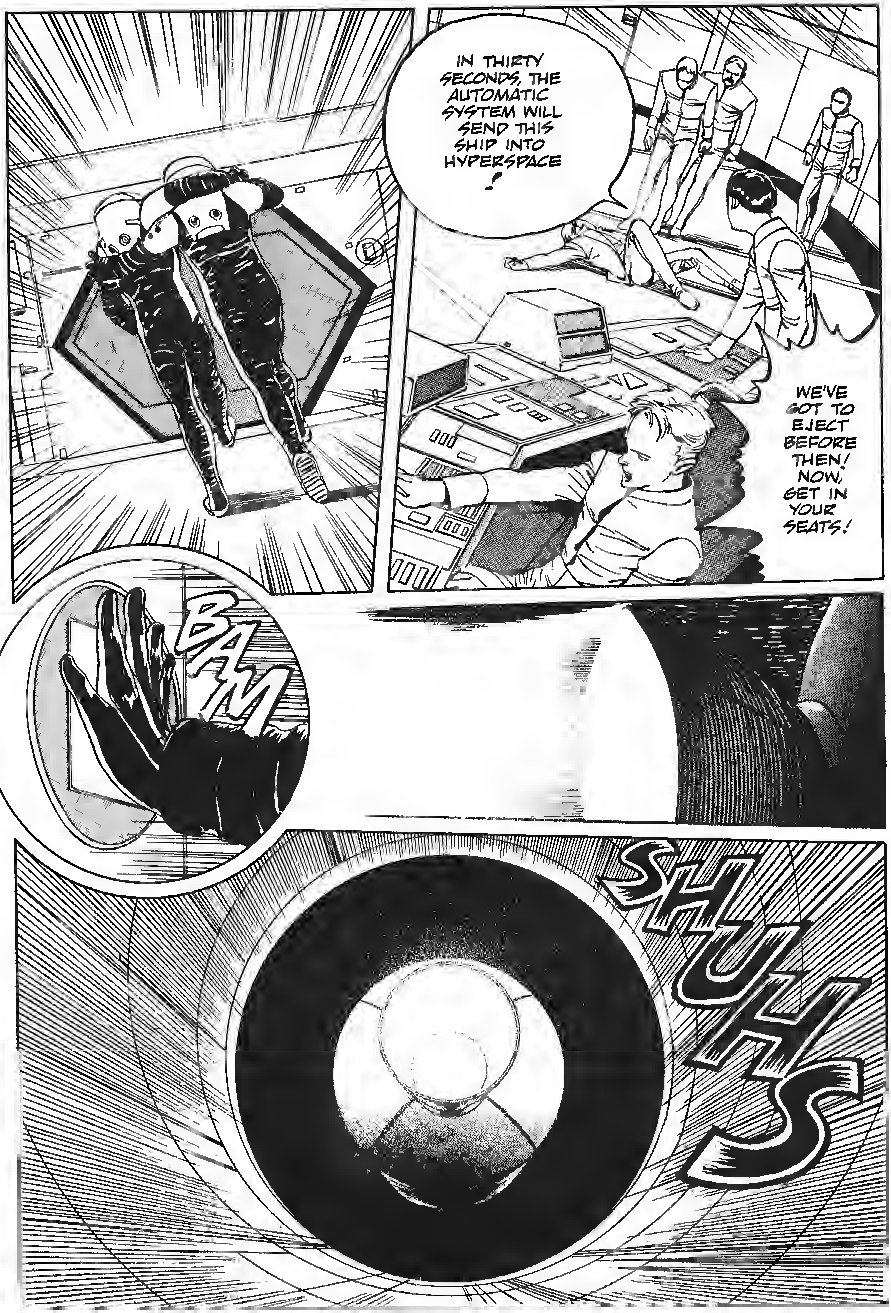

I-IT'S A LIVING BEING! THIS THING'S ALIVE!

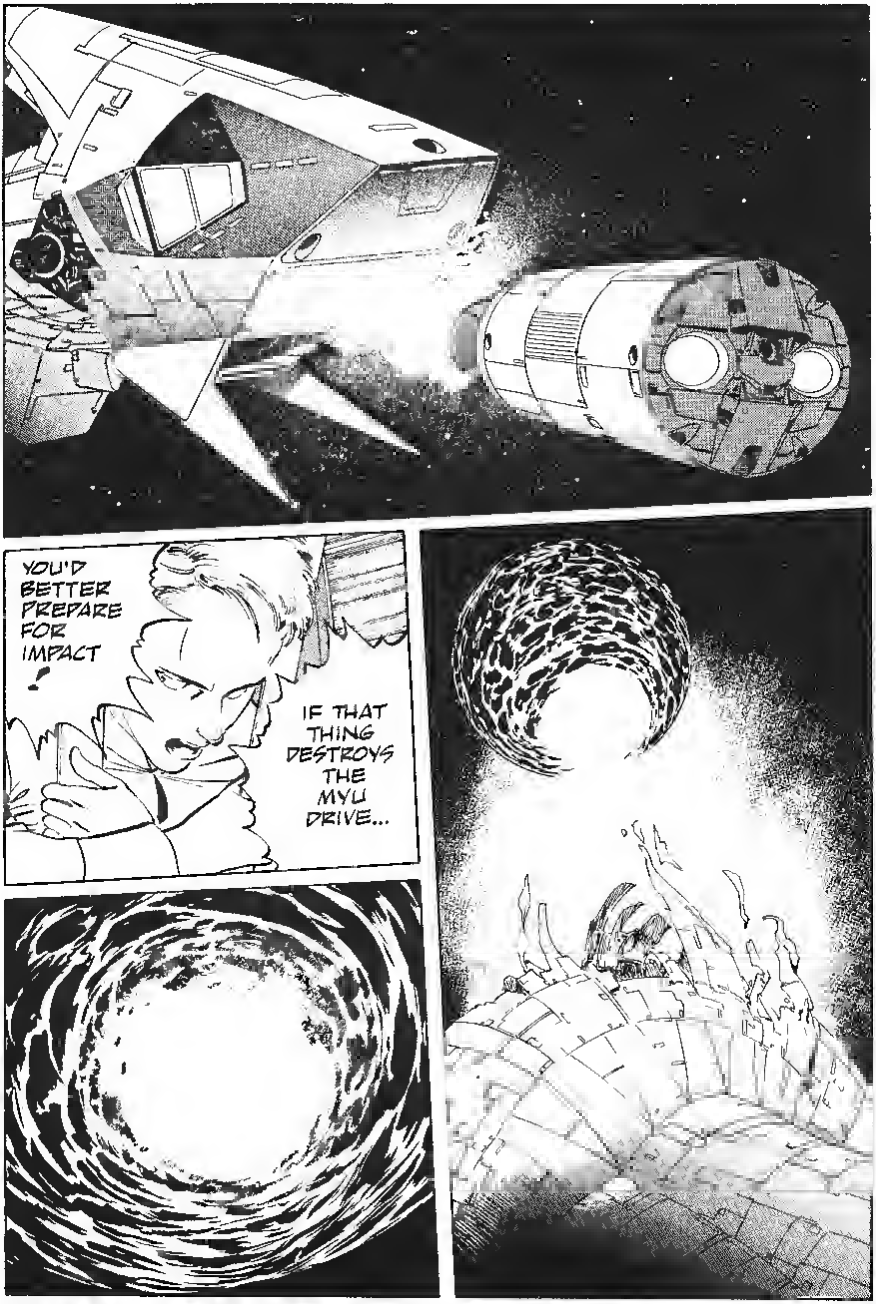
C-CAPTAIN!?
OUT OF THE WAY! CAPTAIN, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
THAT THING SEEMS TO SOMEHOW MOVE AROUND DETECTING AND ABSORBING MATTER!
WHO CARES, AUGUSTUS!? AT A TIME LIKE THIS..!
IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING MORE THAN A HUGE SINGLE-CELLED ANIMAL THAT LIVES ONLY BY INSTINCT..
BUT IT'S THE ULTIMATE LIFE-FORM!

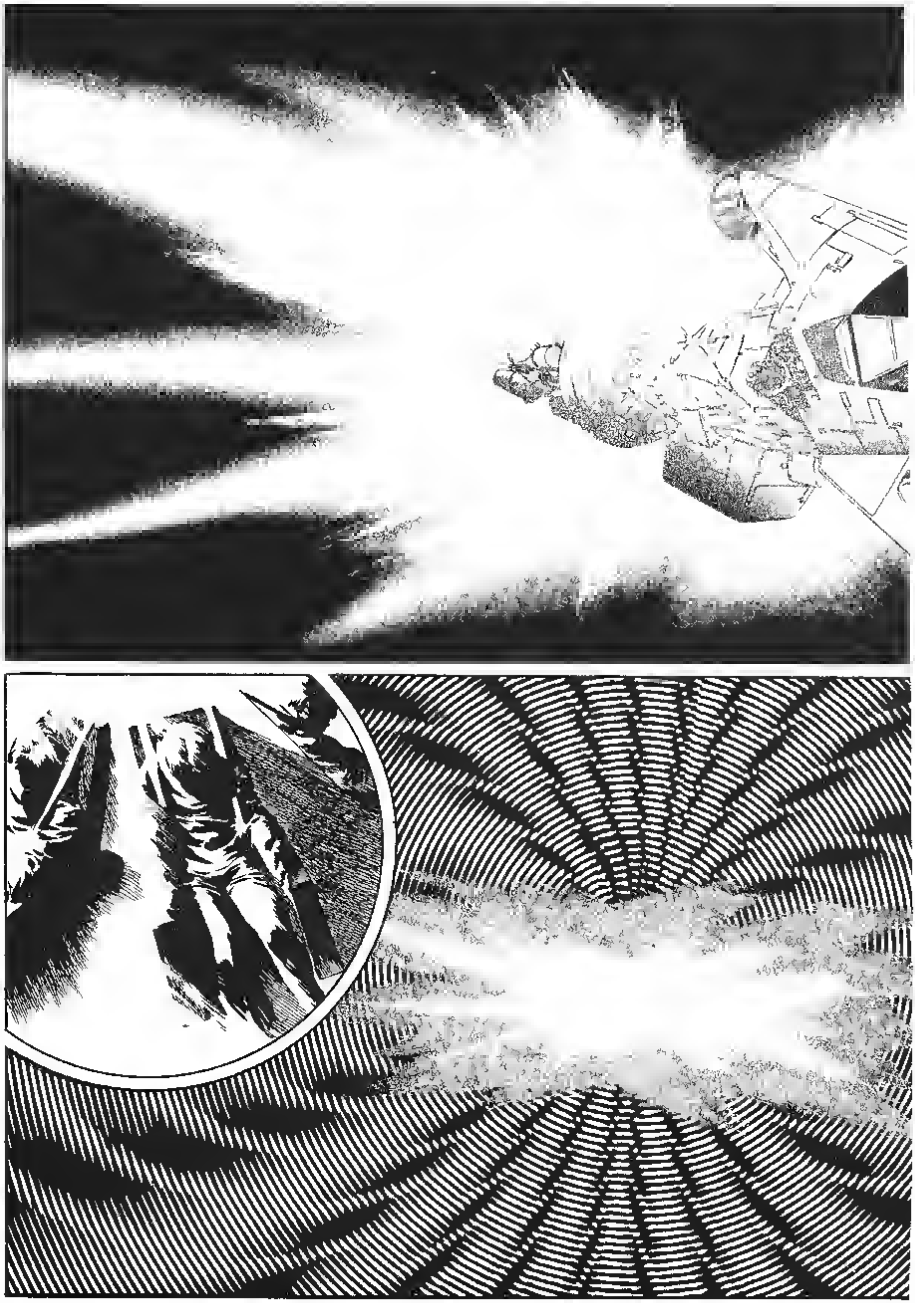

ALL LIVING BEINGS EAT MATTER, CONVERTING IT INTO ENERGY FOR CONTINUED EXISTENCE. IF YOU PUSH THAT TO ITS EXTREME...
YOU HAVE A CREATURE THAT EATS ALL MATTER!
A BLACK-HOLE CREATURE!
IT PROBABLY OUTGREW AND FINALLY SWALLOWED THE PLANET IT WAS LIVING ON.
...BUT INSTEAD OF DIGESTING THE PLANET, A GRAVITATIONAL COLLAPSE WAS TRIGGERED, TURNING IT INTO A BLACK HOLE!

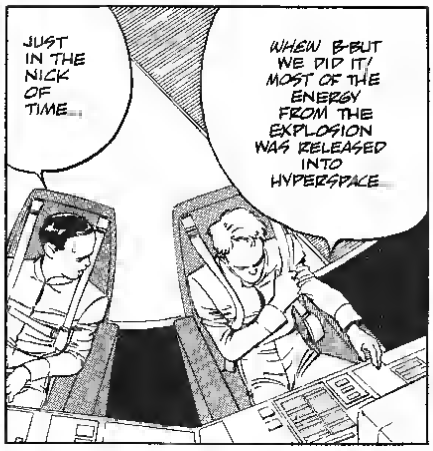
WITH A MICRO BLACK HOLE AT ITS CENTER...
...A THING LIKE THAT COULD SWALLOW A PLANETOID OR A SHIP WITHOUT EFFORT!
IF THAT'S SO, THEN WHY HASN'T THIS SHIP JUST BEEN...?!
YES...
...IN THE CENTER OF THIS SHIP IS SOMETHING EXACTLY LIKE THAT THING--
...THE MYU DRIVE REACTOR!
THAT HUGE CONCENTRATION OF MATTER HAS THE ORB PUZZLED
AND WHAT'S MORE, THE SIZE OF THE MICRO BLACK HOLES IS PRECISELY THE SAME.

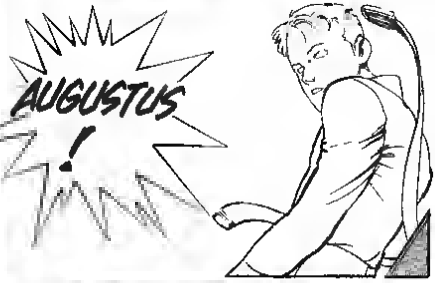
OH. THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN.
TROY, ARE YOU DONE?
IT'S OKAY. I'VE RAISED THE OUTPUT OF THE MVU DRIVE!
HOLD IT, AUGUSTUS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT? WE'VE GOT TO EJECT FROM THIS SHIP AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
I WON'T ALLOW YOU TO ACT ON YOUR OWN! UNTIL THE CAPTAIN AND KOBAYASHI RETURN, I...
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
DANGER
SHK
THIS ISN'T A MATTER OF ONE OR TWO LIVES.
ZZZAP

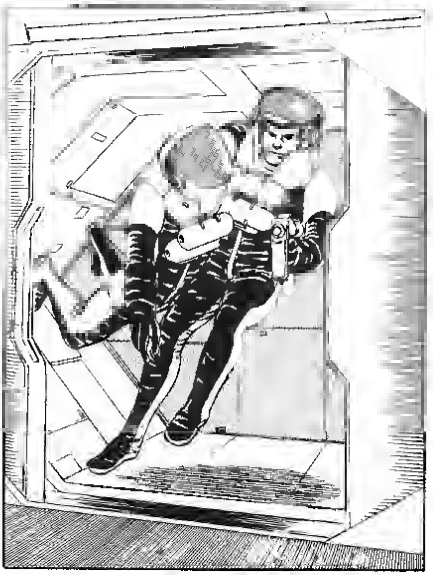

IN THIRTY SECONDS, THE AUTOMATIC SYSTEM WILL SEND THIS SHIP INTO HYPERSPACE!
WE'VE GOT TO EJECT BEFORE THEN! NOW, GET IN YOUR SEATS!
BAM
SHUHS


YOU'D BETTER PREPARE FOR IMPACT!
IF THAT THING DESTROYS THE MYU DRIVE...

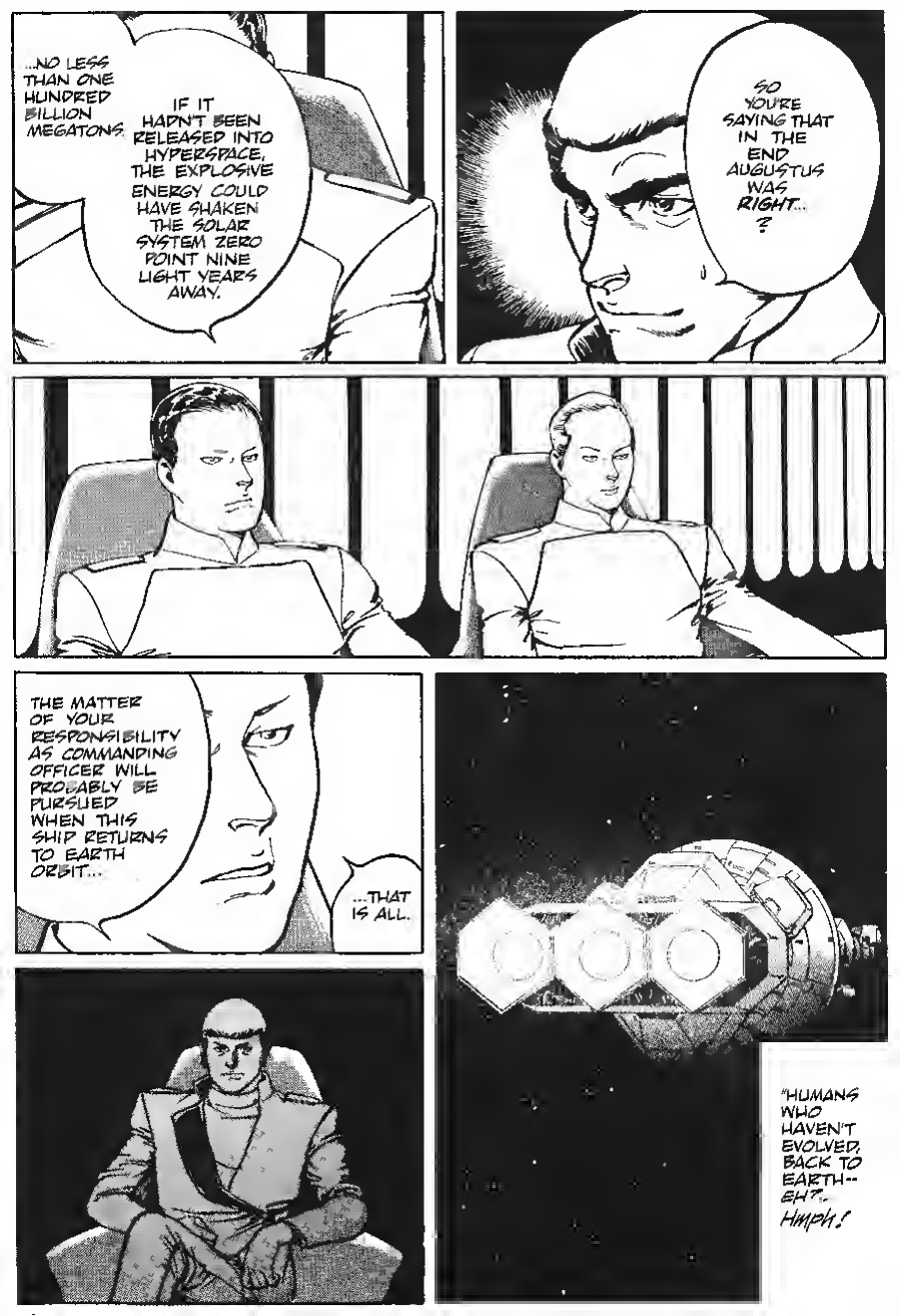


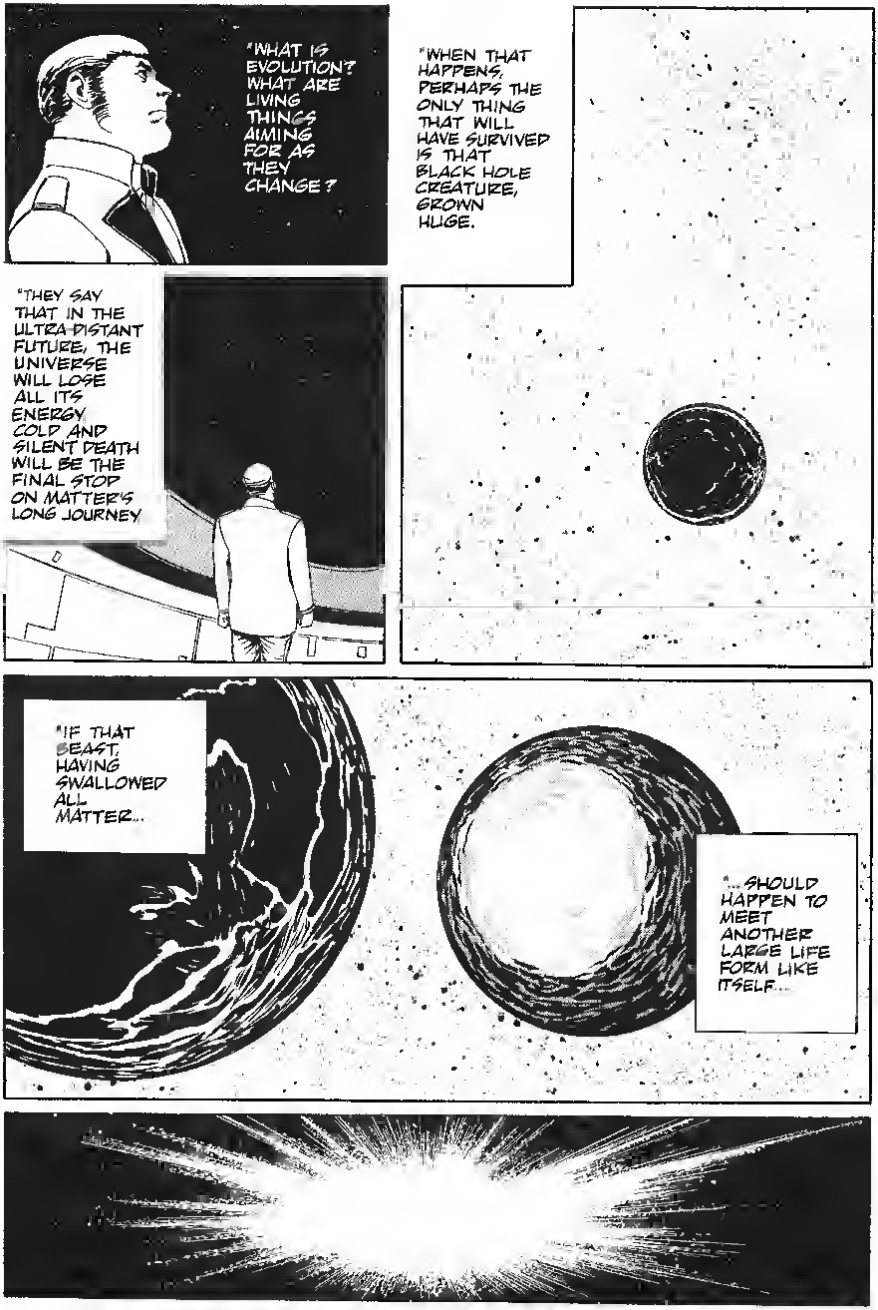

JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME...
WHEW B-BUT WE DID IT! MOST OF THE ENERGY FROM THE EXPLOSION WAS RELEASED INTO HYPERSPACE...

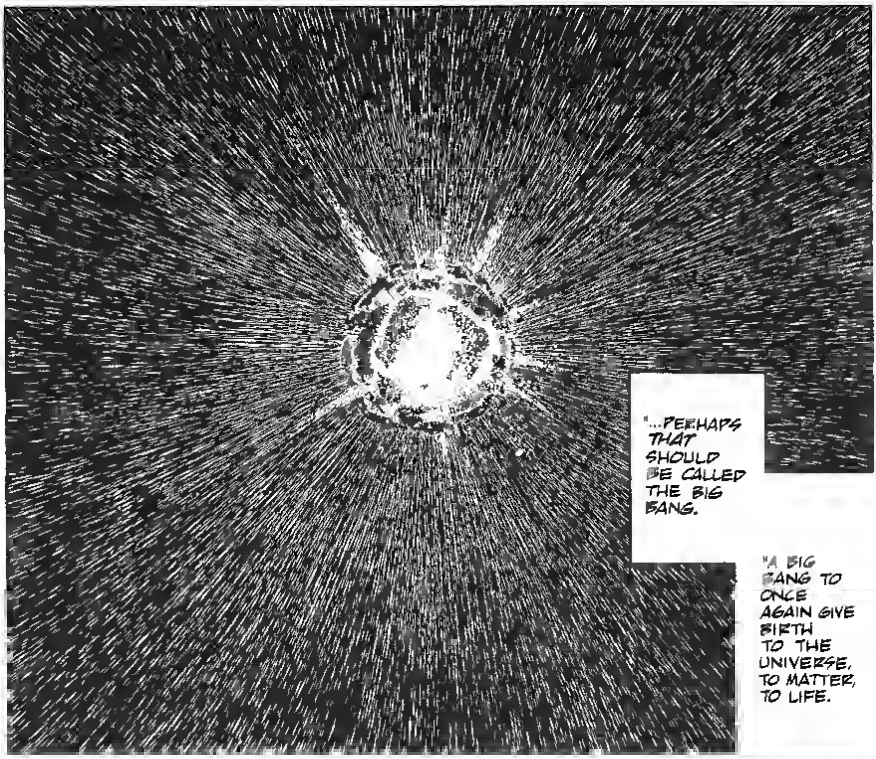

AUGUSTUS!

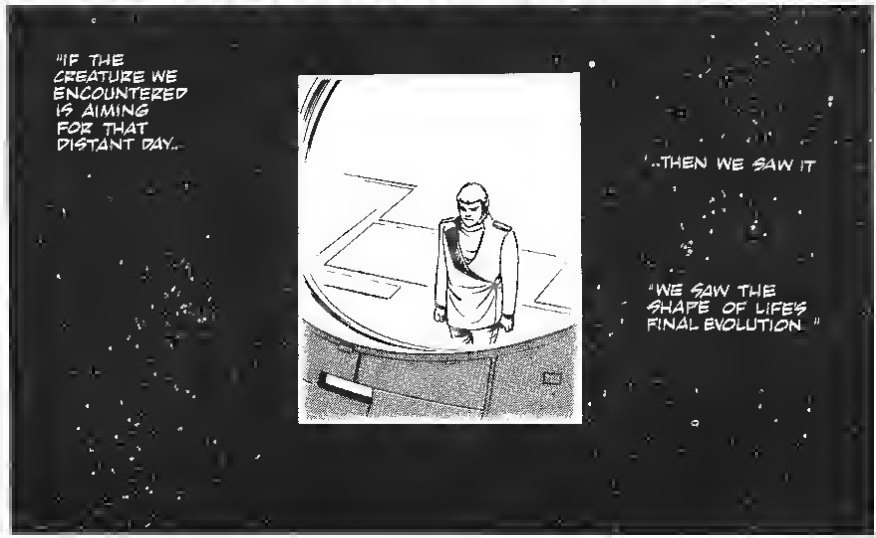


ZZT
WHO COULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT SUCH A CREATURE COULD EXIST?
I KNEW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF TWO BLACK HOLES OF EXACTLY THE SAME SIZE TOUCHED, BUT...
THAT'S RIGHT. A SUPER EXPLOSION..


...NO LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED BILLION MEGATONS.
IF IT HADN'T BEEN RELEASED INTO HYPERSPACE, THE EXPLOSIVE ENERGY COULD HAVE SHAKEN THE SOLAR SYSTEM ZERO POINT NINE LIGHT YEARS AWAY.
SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT IN THE END AUGUSTUS WAS RIGHT...?
THE MATTER OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS COMMANDING OFFICER WILL PROBABLY BE PURSUED WHEN THIS SHIP RETURNS TO EARTH ORBIT...
...THAT IS ALL.
"HUMANS WHO HAVEN'T EVOLVED, BACK TO EARTH-- EH?.. HMPH!


"WHAT IS EVOLUTION? WHAT ARE LIVING THINGS AIMING FOR AS THEY CHANGE?
"WHEN THAT HAPPENS, PERHAPS THE ONLY THING THAT WILL HAVE SURVIVED IS THAT BLACK HOLE CREATURE, GROWN HUGE.
"THEY SAY THAT IN THE ULTRA-DISTANT FUTURE, THE UNIVERSE WILL LOSE ALL ITS ENERGY. COLD AND SILENT DEATH WILL BE THE FINAL STOP ON MATTER'S LONG JOURNEY
"IF THAT BEAST, HAVING SWALLOWED ALL MATTER...
"...SHOULD HAPPEN TO MEET ANOTHER LARGE LIFE FORM LIKE ITSELF...


"...PERHAPS THAT SHOULD BE CALLED THE BIG BANG.
"A BIG BANG TO ONCE AGAIN GIVE BIRTH TO THE UNIVERSE, TO MATTER, TO LIFE.


"IF THE CREATURE WE ENCOUNTERED IS AIMING FOR THAT DISTANT DAY..
..THEN WE SAW IT
"WE SAW THE SHAPE OF LIFE'S FINAL EVOLUTION."